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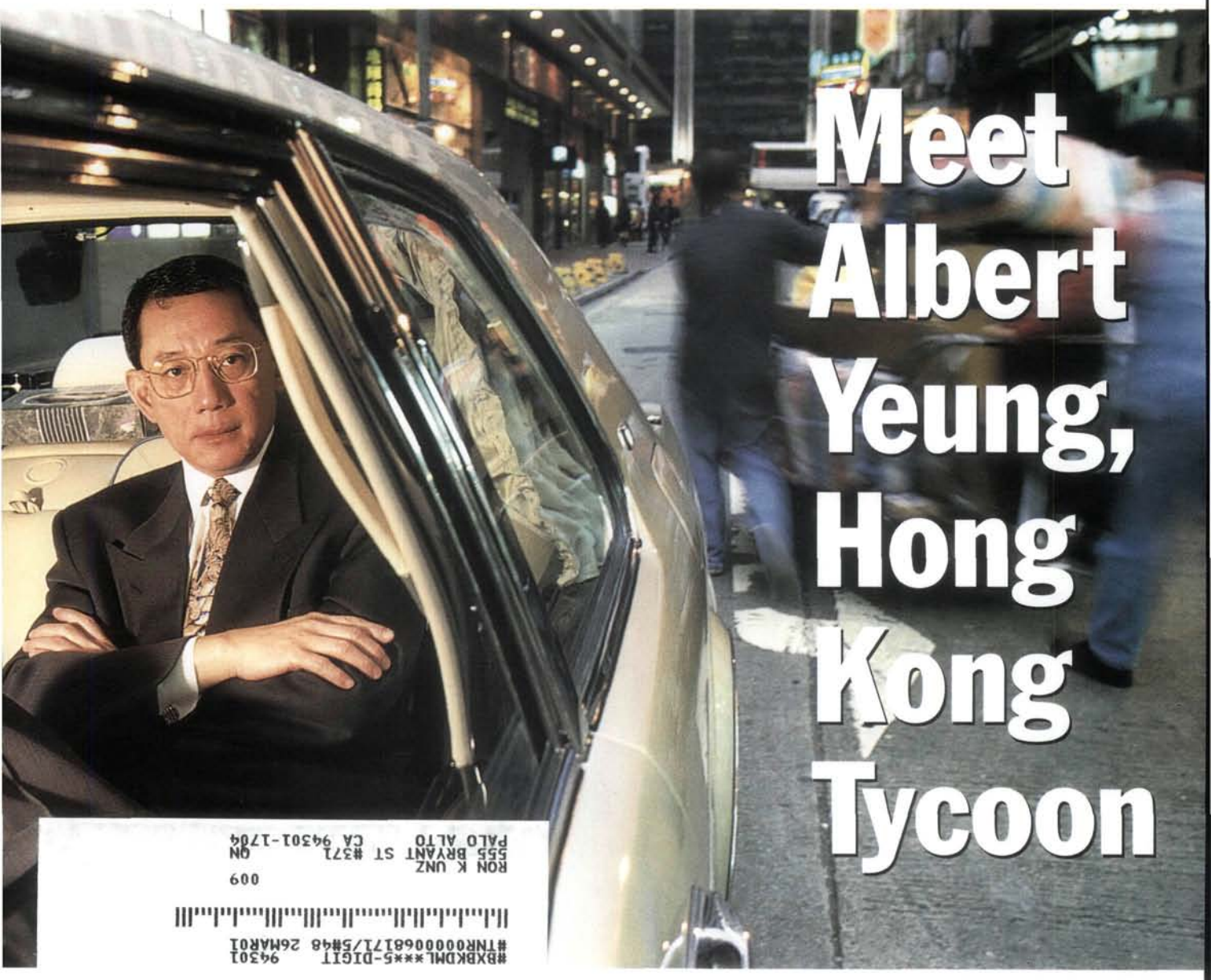

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JULY 14 & 21, 1997

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CORRESPONDENCE

Poppycock

To the editors:

A better title for Stephen Glass's cover story on the Bush presidency ("Peddling Poppy," June 9) would be "Peddling Poppycock," because that is what much of the article does.

My criticism is based on the treatment accorded Hofstra University as the unwitting accomplice in fostering an age of Bush revivalism. It's too bad Glass ignored the voluminous evidence from the conference that overwhelmingly refutes his thesis. He is probably not the first journalist to overlook the facts in a desperate attempt to back up a catchy story line.

I have only to point out a few considerations that should have made it clear to Glass that the Hofstra University Bush Conference provided a variety of views, some favorable and some unfavorable to the Bush presidency. If Glass had taken the time to review the tapes of the more than thirty-five sessions scheduled over a three-day period with more than 200 scholars, journalists and Bush alumni, he would have been forced to conclude that there was a balance of views on the Bush presidency with no purpose to stack the deck in favor of or in opposition to the actions and policies of the Bush administration. Or Glass could have interviewed some of the 100 student guides who hosted the participants and interacted with them on the issues of the period. Again, he would have discovered evidence to refute his preconceived notion of a biased conference.

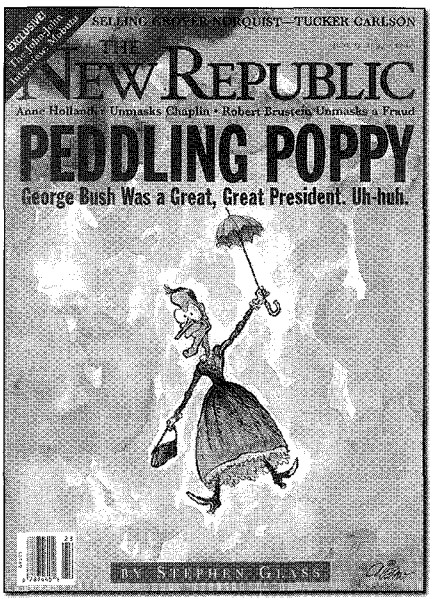
It would also have taken just a little more effort to discover that his snide putdown of Hofstra as an out-of-the-loop Long Island campus (within an hour of Manhattan) revealed his out-of-the-loop, outdated knowledge of the current university scene. He missed the fact that, for the entire week of the conference, a notice on the largest billboard in Times Square announced the Bush conference every three minutes.

What it really boils down to is that the presentation of Hofstra University's role in its recent conference on the Bush presidency is no more than third-rate journalism. Perhaps Glass has been spending too much time with proctologists, to whom he refers in the article, listening to their "views."

WILLIAM F. LEVANTROSSER
Director, Hofstra Conference on the Presidency of George Bush
Hofstra University
Hempstead, New York

To the editors:

Stephen Glass completely distorted the argument I made at the Hofstra Conference on the Presidency of George Bush. Had I claimed "that Barbara Bush was as much in charge of the country's policy as her husband," my paper would indeed have been "seminal"—and fanciful. In fact, I barely mentioned Mrs. Bush's policymaking role. Susan Porter Rose, along with the other Bushies, bristled at my suggestion that the sainted Mrs. Bush was political or calculating in any way. Their hagiographic portrait of a warm, cuddly, authentic Barbara Bush who never postured, never played any kind of political role, illustrated my point—that by appearing uninterested in politics and power a First Lady gains political stature and popularity. In my


SELLING GROVER NORQUIST—TUCKER CARLSON
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Anne Hollander Unmasks Chaplin • Robert Brustein Unmasks a Fraud
PEDDLING POPPY
George Bush Was a Great, Great President. Uh-huh.
BY STEPHEN GLASS

oral presentation, in my paper (a copy of which I would have gladly provided) and in my book *Affairs of State: The Rise and Rejection of the Presidential Couple Since World War II*, I defined the modern co-presidency as a "joint leadership project" focused on image-making, not power-sharing. My paper emphasized Mrs. Bush's role in helping George Bush "lead the nation symbolically," not in dictating policy. Regarding Glass's claim that I "airily" dismissed a question about Mrs. Bush's role in the 1992 campaign, the official tape of the session did not record any such question. As he and I have never been formally introduced, I can only assume he was one of the people who approached me right after the session as we were being hustled offstage. I am sorry if I hurt Glass's feelings by replying too quickly to his "no doubt" original and penetrating query. I am also sorry if my distinction between politicking and policymaking was too subtle for him. Next time, he might want to follow standard journalistic practice by introducing himself properly and giving his targets an opportunity to discuss their arguments at greater length before concocting his burlesque.

GIL TROY
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

Stephen Glass replies:

I'm not sure how to respond to Professor Levantrosser's criticism; he offers no evidence that the conference was balanced. But, for the record, I attended at least one panel during each of the sessions, and, since many panels overlapped, I listened to dozens of additional hours on tape. I also read dozens of the papers presented, including Professor Troy's.

It's surprising that Troy defends his paper by invoking Susan Porter Rose, Barbara Bush's longtime chief of staff. After he delivered his paper at Hofstra, Rose flatly said his thesis was wrong. "As for Gil's paper, the Bushes' tenure was not a co-presidency," she said. "They were partners, but the fact is, any way you analyze it, in the administration there is only one president." Despite his denials, Troy did make much of power-sharing between the Bushes. At one point he said: "What sounded like a recipe for wifely passivity was, in fact, an invitation to share power quietly, subtly, behind-the-scenes but effectively." As for Troy's quibble about when we "formally" met, I introduced myself as a TNR reporter after his speech. We shook hands and talked for a few minutes, during which time I openly took notes. As to Professor Levantrosser's objection to my calling Hofstra "out-of-the-loop": if you have to advertise in Times Square that you're in-the-loop, you're not.

Diplomatic ties

To the editors:

How can Tucker Carlson write a profile of Grover Norquist ("What I Sold at the Revolution," June 9) without even once mentioning Norquist's anti-tax pledge? The simple pledge not to vote for any tax increase has been taken by hundreds of candidates for public office at all levels. Although he probably did not invent it, promoting it has been Norquist's number one obsession, and it has consumed years of his life.

The effort paid off most spectacularly in the case of George Bush. Although Bush refused to formally sign Norquist's piece of paper, he did pledge not to raise taxes during the 1988 campaign. The pledge was an issue that year because Norquist made it one by demanding that all candidates take it and by just plain dogged determination. Of course, Bush

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broke the pledge, and it was probably the largest single factor in his defeat in 1992. I don't know any other activist who has been able to enforce his or her agenda to the extent that a president was brought down in the process. (In 1996, Dole took no chances. He signed the pledge early on, with Norquist at his side.)

Let Carlson whine. Norquist has already had an impact on history. It remains to be seen whether Carlson ever will.

PETER FLAHERTY
President
National Legal and Policy Center
McLean, Virginia

To the editors:
In his otherwise detailed critique of political activist Grover Norquist's business dealings in the Seychelles and elsewhere, Tucker Carlson neglects to inform his readers that his own father, Richard Carlson, served as U.S. ambassador to the Seychelles during the period in question. This seems a curious oversight. Any comment?

NICHOLAS EBERSTADT
Washington, D.C.

Tucker Carlson replies:
I didn't mention my father's former job for the same reason I didn't mention the Kennedy assassination: neither was relevant, in any way, to the story I was writing. Incidentally, my father left the country long before Norquist began accepting money from the Marxist dictator who runs it.

Keeping tabs

To the editors:
A fan of Kathie Lee I'm not, and William Powers's point in "Getting Kathie Lee" (June 9) about the hypocritical broadsheet press is well taken. But when I listen to Howard Stern and look at the covers of the tabs and all the other in-your-face, like-it-is indulgence that now passes for freedom and honesty, I grow nostalgic for a little civilized phoniness.

MAURICE BROWN
New Paltz, New York

Over the rainbow

To the editors:
In his saturation bombing of Regina M. Schwartz's silly book about the Bible, Peter Berkowitz ("Thou Shalt Not Kill," June 23) misses a couple of easy targets. First, "plentitude"—the term Schwartz contrasts to what she sees as the Bible's embrace of "scarcity"—is a solecism. The correct word is "plenitude," without the first "t". Second, when Dorothy confronts the Wizard of Oz, she does not say, "I am Dorothy, the meek and weak"; she says, "small and meek." What are things coming to, when trendy intellectuals can't even get their pop culture references right?

STEVE SCHROER
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Overexuberance

To the editors:
In his unduly harsh review ("The Jeremiah Racket," June 2) of Dana Mack's *The Assault on Parenthood*, Alan Wolfe claims that educational conservatives rely on one another for bogus information to conduct disreputable "Ponzi schemes." As an example, Wolfe cites what he calls a "juicy quote" about the National Education Association that Mack recycled from my 1983 book, *Necessary Lessons*—"Here's to the only union that owns its own Cabinet department"—only to doubt it was ever uttered. Before weaving his conspiracy theory, it's too bad that Wolfe failed to give me a telephone call to try to clear up the matter.

For the record, the contested remark was made directly to me by Linley Stafford, the well-liked and all-too-honest NEA publicist. On the night before the creation of the Education Department in October 1979, Stafford was exuberant. I quoted him without name to save him possible remorse and professional embarrassment.

GILBERT T. SEWALL
New York, New York

Alan Wolfe replies:
I am pleased that Gilbert Sewall has finally given the citation he neglected to provide in his book.

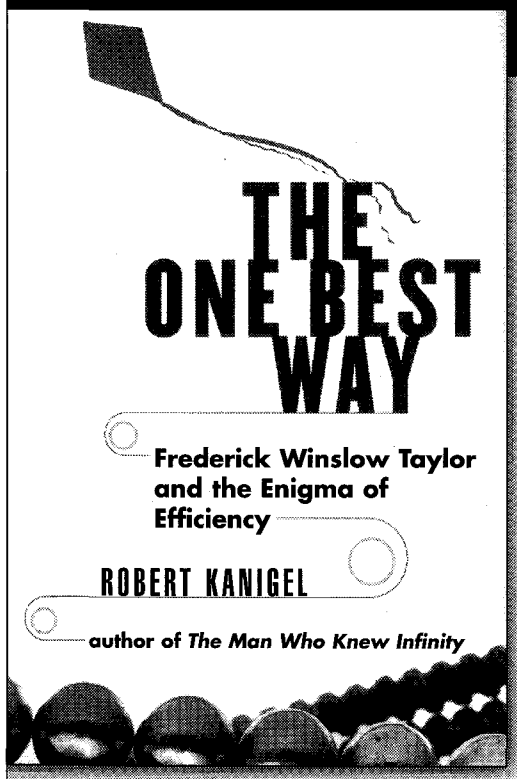
No laughing matter

To the editors:
THE NEW REPUBLIC really blotted its Notebook with that June 23 item attacking Sidney Blumenthal. It was worse than just ugly: it was unfunny.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG
New York, New York

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The man who changed the world with a stopwatch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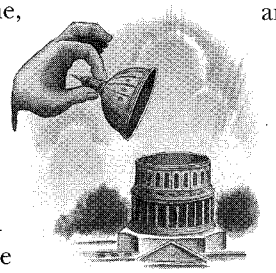
FROM WASHINGTON

Take your medicine

I no longer smoke, except for the occasional cadged party cigarette, and even then I find I don't enjoy the old delivery systems as I did once. But on the Fourth of July, I am going to say the Pledge of Allegiance and light up a Marlboro, or perhaps an unfiltered Camel. It's my patriotic duty.

It's yours too, if you care about living in a nation predicated on the idea that the citizen must be protected from the natural tendency of the state to expand into his or her life. The proposed settlement between Big Tobacco and Big Government epitomizes the new statism. It has been called the nanny state, but that is far too kind a term. It is too cold, too cruel, too implacable, too illiberal to be a nanny. It is the Nurse Ratched state.

The old statism believed in an activist government that sought to use the power of the state for do-gooding social engineering: redistributing wealth; improving the health, education and welfare of the citizenry; enforcing equality under the law; sponsoring works that added to the safety and well-being of the public (roads, hospitals, rural electrification); and warring against threats to the public good (polio, organized crime, urban slums). The old statism proved marvelously competent at engineering on the level of specific and concrete goods (the Hoover Dam, Social Security, the Voting Rights Act) and disastrously incompetent on the more grandiose level of effecting changes in human behavior (the welfare programs, urban renewal, school busing). Its failures eventually overwhelmed its successes, which finally made pharaonic liberalism untenable as the operating philosophy of a practical politician. Thus, President Clinton, the most practical of all, declared in 1995 that "the era of big government is over."



Actually, what is over is the old model of big government. What is begun is the new model. Projects such as Vice President Gore's National Performance Review gave us hope that the new model would correct the flaws of the old, that it would understand that government was good at the delivery of specific goods and services, not revolutionary social overhauls.

It turns out that the new model is as devoted to spectacular schemes of social engineering as the old one—and it has added the awful idea that these schemes may be achieved not through legislation and federal funding, but through a creative and brutal system of mandated behaviorism, in which the state uses its immense powers to force targeted citizens and entities to "voluntarily" accept a violation of their rights and an encroachment upon their liberties—and to pay for this privilege.

The two principal methods by which the Nurse Ratched state achieves its aims are both rooted in that power which the Framers wanted most to limit, the power to criminalize and to punish, to deprive a citizen who violates the state's wishes of his liberty or his property. The two methods, which overlap in practice, are the expansion of the definition of actions as illegal behavior; and the exploitation of this power to win submission through extortion—that is, by threatening to extract or to deny large amounts of money from noncomplying individuals and entities.

The schemes of the new statism have certain similarities. The idea in each case is for politicians to identify a vaguely defined but universally supported good (minorities should not be discriminated against, disabled people should have a chance to work, children should not smoke), and then to exploit public approval of this good to win acceptance of a new and vast expansion of the state's powers, and finally to render illegal the opposition to this expansion.

The fruits of this process are all around us. The efforts to sustain affirmative action rest on these coercive methods. So, too, do the efforts to enforce the decree that private workplaces be free of discriminatory, harassing or even rude behavior. The intrusions resulting from the Americans With Disabilities Act have mutated beyond sanity. And every day, it seems, the boundaries are pushed further. *The New York Times* recently reported that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has formally asked all fifty states to criminalize the act of allowing a

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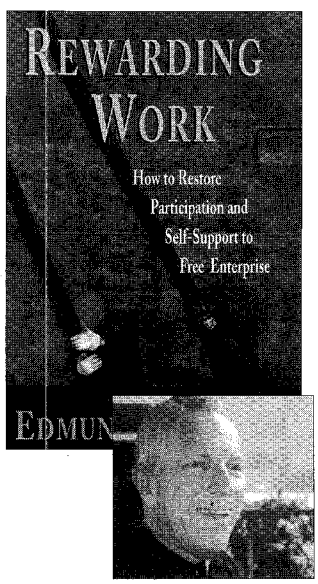

Edmund Phelps is McVickar Professor of Political Economy at Columbia University. He is also the author of *Structural Slumps*, published by Harvard University Press.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 14 & 21, 1997

OVERDUE PROCESS

The end of a century is a fine time for apocalyptic feelings, as historians have shown; but at the end of this century, we should make a special effort to resist the mood. For an apocalyptic century should be let go unapocalyptically, to show that its lesson has been truly learned. The number of people who perished in the ruinous revolutions of the twentieth century is not incalculable, but it is unimaginable. If such death is the measure of evil, then this was the most evil century in human history. It was a long paroxysm of utopian crime and good riddance to it. In its last decade, of course, the liberal virtues are finally ascendant, but it is much too late for unqualified joy. Where the new political and material decencies of the post-totalitarian world are rising, and there are regions in which they are not yet rising, they are rising on a foundation of corpses.

The magnitude of totalitarian murder makes it seem almost mythical. Hitler, Stalin, Mao: they are gone and, from the standpoint of justice, they got away. So it was a little shocking to read this banal remark last week, by the deputy chief of staff of the Cambodian army: "I did not talk to Pol Pot, but I saw him today sitting in a house." They have him! The freedom of Pol Pot in the years since 1979, and the prominence of the Khmer Rouge in the politics of Cambodia, has been perhaps the most demoralizing fact in the world. In the jungle of realpolitik, uses were found for this creature of the jungle, and when there were no uses for him, he was left alone. (In the 1980s, the government of the United States also had a use for the Khmer Rouge.) The difficulties of Cambodia's recovery are owed not least to Pol Pot's presence in its midst.

The news that Pol Pot murdered Son Sen, his deputy in infamy, was only technically news; but the news that, as a consequence of this latest internecine bloodbath in the Khmer Rouge, Pol Pot's troops had turned on him, the news that he had been captured—who did not hear this report with a revived spirit? Is it really possible that, at least with respect to this one of the century's obscenities, we may improve on the sense of tragedy and dare to hope for the sight of justice? Not revenge; justice. There is no revenge for the murder of a million people. But nothing could more securely and satisfyingly establish that morality has withstood the assaults of ideology than the appearance of Brother Number One in the dock.

And then the complications struck, as they always do in the face of something as simple as genocide. Who is holding Pol Pot? It is not clear. The Cambodian government does not want a trial to take place in Phnom Penh, where it would lead to trouble, and anyway the legal system of the country is not equipped for the enterprise. There is no standing international tribunal to which such a defendant may be brought. The United States has asked Canada to invoke its far-reaching law against genocide and (with the assistance of the American military) to extradite Pol Pot—a great honor, we would have thought, but the Canadians do not seem to think so. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's comment that the United States had put Canada "on the spot, but it's not for the first time" was not exactly bursting with a sense of history. The two prime ministers of Cambodia have asked the United Nations to preside over the administration of justice, but (surprise!) the government of China has promised to veto any such effort in the Security Council. On the same day that the House of Representatives, with the enthusiastic support of the White House, renewed China's Most Favored Nation status, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry in Beijing pronounced that "the question of Pol Pot is Cambodia's internal affair. It should be decided by Cambodians themselves without foreign interference." This, from the representative of the greatest interferer in Cambodia in modern times. There is talk of bringing the matter before the General Assembly. Of course, all of this may be moot. The body of Pol Pot may already be lying in a ditch in Anlong Veng.

A trial, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said soberly, is "not imminent." He is probably right. The treachery of Cambodian politics and the casuistry of international politics may combine to let Pol Pot get away, and merely die. Were this to happen, a great opportunity for moral and historical clarity will have been squandered; and it will be small consolation that nothing that Noam Chomsky says on the subject will matter. Secretary of State Albright should stay furiously on the case. What luck it would be, for this century to end with the appearance of this man in the most unapocalyptic setting that human beings have ever devised: a court of law. •

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NOTEBOOK

SHOOTING STARR: The independent Whitewater counsel Kenneth Starr won an important victory on Monday when, in response to the Supreme Court's refusal to enter the fray, the White House turned over notes of a meeting between Hillary Rodham Clinton, her private lawyer and the White House counsel. But an extremely disturbing report by Bob Woodward in *The Washington Post* has raised serious doubts about Starr's good faith and the credibility of his entire investigation. Woodward claims that Starr's prosecutors and FBI agents have been interviewing Arkansas state troopers about their knowledge of extramarital relationships Bill Clinton may have had as governor. According to Woodward, Starr's investigators inquired about twelve to fifteen women by name, including Paula Corbin Jones, in a fishing expedition for comments Clinton may have made about his involvement in the Whitewater land deal. This magazine has taken seriously the underlying allegations in Whitewater, and has supported Starr. But if Woodward's account is accurate, it suggests a misuse of prosecutorial discretion so grotesque as to call into question Starr's fitness to serve as independent counsel. No interpretation of mandate gives any prosecutor the right to abuse his power to conduct a smear campaign, and it is exceedingly difficult to imagine what purpose trolling for bimbos might serve other than smearing Clinton. Starr has an absolute obligation to explain himself. If he cannot do so satisfactorily, he has an obligation to remove himself.

DELAYED JUSTICE: Because, incredibly enough, the Supreme Court does not consider NEW REPUBLIC press deadlines as it determines its calender, this issue of TNR went to press before the Court handed down the most significant decisions of the 1997 term. Our attempts to grapple with the meaning of it all will have to wait until the next issue. In the meantime, we can't help celebrating one verdict that did come down in time, the result in *Agostini* v. *Felton,* in which the Court overturned a 1985 decision barring New York City from sending public school teachers into parochial schools to provide congressionally mandated remedial education for disadvantaged children. In her narrowly written opinion, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor emphasized that neutrality toward religion is the core of the First Amendment's prohibition on religious establishments, and she properly held that the New York program didn't favor or disfavor religion by encouraging people to change their religious practices. Although supporters of school vouchers are hailing O'Conner's opinion, the constitutionality of vouchers still remains an open question. In response to a surprisingly rigid dissent by Justice David Souter, O'Connor emphasized that no state money in New York was paid directly to religious schools. Voucher supporters can argue that vouchers, too, direct money not to schools but to individual families. But Souter will reply that money from vouchers ends up in the school's coffers. O'Connor also stressed that public school teachers can be trusted not to become excessively entangled with religion in parochial schools; it's not clear whether she will be willing to trust private school teachers as well.

COMPUTER ERROR: The Clinton fund-raising scandal mutates ever outward. After exhuming, under force of subpoena, the contents of the seven computers used by John Huang and Melinda Yee—the former Commerce Department employees whose prodigious fund-raising efforts are now the subject of multiple investigations—Commerce Department lawyers had another unpleasant surprise. The weather-beaten PCs contained evidence of further transgressions—not by Huang and Yee, but by up to twenty unfortunate low-level Commerce employees who had used the computers before them. According to department lawyers, the hard drives were chock-full of résumés, personal budgets, grad school applications, love letters and other documents suggesting that Commerce staffers had, in numerous but petty violations of the law, used public computers for private purpose. The lawyers had no choice but to turn the problematic printouts over to the department's Inspector General, who has reportedly begun his own investigation into the affair. The belletristic employees face a range of possible punishments, from a letter of reprimand to ruinous civil and criminal penalties. Department lawyers, meanwhile, are fretting about the harsh fate in store for these collateral casualties of the Clinton scandals. "These pretty small-scale violations are going to be subject to intense investigation and intense scrutiny," says one Commerce staffer. As Washington's defense lawyers once more give fervent thanks to the election of the man from Arkansas.

TAXING LOGIC: Last week's editorial argued that cutting the tax rate on capital gains income is bad economics. In the spirit of using marginal inducements to produce changes in behavior, we offer two additional reasons. First: subsidizing capital gains encourages investors to dump their bonds, which are taxed at normal rates, and buy stocks, which are taxed at the lower capital gains rate. That forces the Treasury to offer higher interest rates on its bonds. Second: the capital gains break gives corporations an incentive to pay their stockholders in stock (taxed at the low capital gains rate) rather than in dividends (taxed as ordinary income). Which illustrates that it's easy to convert ordinary income into capital gains, which shows the stupidity of favoring one form of income over another.

FALSE DAWN: In a notebook item last week, we boneheadedly referred to *New York Times* reporter Don Van Natta Jr. as Dawn Van Natta Jr. We should have known better: the *Times* does not give bylines to Jersey girls. •

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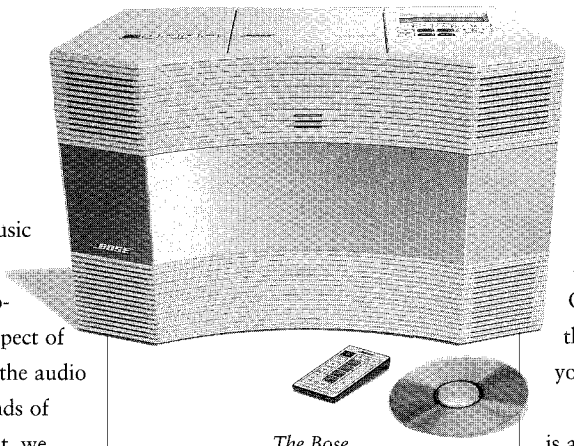
LESS THAN A FOOT TALL, YET LOOKED UP TO BY SO MANY.



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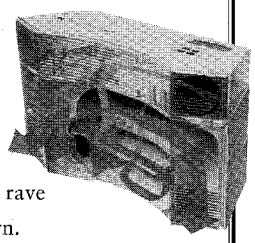

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ON THE HILL

REBEL ROUSERS

By Hanna Rosin

The howling for Newt Gingrich's head has begun to resemble a crazed game of Mad Libs. Each month or so, the peevish players fill in a part of speech—a new irate adjective, a new livid noun, a new outraged ultimatum, a new furious line-in-the-sand. The words change slightly, but the structure stays the same. The June 23 issue of *Roll Call* contains the following portentous sports metaphor, from one anonymous Rebel: "If Gingrich fumbles tax cuts, all hell will break loose. This is the top issue for us." In my notes from a few months ago, I have the following quote, perhaps from the same Rebel, or a comrade: "If Gingrich fumbles this ethics payment, all hell will break loose. This is the top priority for us right now." Sometimes there are off-kilter variations, vaguely menacing in a fortune cookie kind of way. Like "be careful what you wish for in life, because you just might get it," spoken by one anonymous angry apostate as a threat to Republican leadership, in a recent issue of *The Hill*.

The players, a strike force of eleven Class of '94 freshman right-wingers, are increasingly giddy in mutiny, and in the attention paid to mutineers. But they seem not to have noticed one essential fact: their opponent has left the table and gone back to work. While the Rebels are busy plotting revolution strategy and measuring out the gallows, Gingrich is ploddingly busy. The rank and file fault the speaker for the latest fiascoes, primarily the disaster relief bill, but he actually made the correct political calls, and made them early. Had they followed his advice, they would not be simmering now. In fact, it's the Rebels themselves who caused the train wreck and used the already blackened speaker as their all-purpose excuse.

Newt is in an impossible bind. He's doing his same old empowerment routine, the same Listen, Learn and Lead stuff that gave the Rebels a voice in the first place, except now they think it's revoltingly weak. Born into the Contract and bored by House-work, they are eager for the Next Phase of the Revolution, and his soothing voice now irks them. The Rebels are often allied with CATS—the Conservative Action Team, a rump group of old freshman radicals dedicated to fiscal and moral Calvinism. One is John Doolittle, a fresh-faced crusader from California. As it became clear the Republicans were going to lose the fight over the disaster relief bill, Doolittle would sink lower in his chair at the deputy whip meetings, his mouth curdled into a scowl. Doolittle was the main advocate at the meetings for what became the Republican strategy—the one Gingrich resisted. Along with Majority Leader Dick Armey and Whip Tom DeLay, Doolittle wanted to ram through the two riders on the bill—one to change Census calculation methods and the other to prevent government shutdowns.

But Clinton called their bluff and threatened to veto, leaving Republicans stunned and whimpering. Overnight, they caved and excised their pet riders. The gloom didn't stop Doolittle from making his Point. He came to the next deputy whip meeting brandishing a copy of *The Washington Times* and read aloud all the descriptions that displeased him: "retreat" and "pulling back." "He was very sour and very, very loud," recalls someone at the meeting. "He thought we should have held out and just kept pushing the same issue again and again, and letting him veto it again and again, and eventually the blame would shift to the president."

Never did it occur to Doolittle or his allies that it was a suicidal idea in the first place: tying up money destined for hundreds of Americans flooded out of their homes in the name of something as obscure as the Census count had never been all that swift a notion. But the thought that the disaster-relief stickup was a bad idea *had* occurred to Gingrich, and before it was implemented. A week before Republicans introduced their bill, Gingrich spoke with Bob Livingston, the rider-hating chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. Both agreed the bill should go clean. Armey and DeLay disagreed, so Gingrich played the patient patriarch and left them to battle it out, figuring that, within a few days, they'd see their error. "Gingrich figured once they touched a stove and saw their hand get burned, they'd think Livingston was right," says Connecticut's Christopher Shays, a Republican who opposed the strategy. "But they put one hand on, then another, then finally they jumped on top of the stove. It was only when Newt saw they were in pain and agony that he decided to cut our losses.... I can't understand how they are willing to have him take the entire hit."

The outcome had been foreshadowed, on a smaller scale. Two weeks earlier, Republicans Wally Herger and Richard Pombo tried to smuggle a Mack truck of a bill through the House. Ostensibly responding to floods, they wrote a bill exempting any flood control project from the Endangered Species Act. But they sneakily left out the word "emergency" in the phrase "flood control project." Their bill would have exempted a wide array of quotidian flood control projects—draining a swamp, building a dam or a levee—severely undermining a popular environmental law and causing another nasty dose of publicity. When the wiser and greener Republican Sherwood Boehlert saw what Herger and Pombo threatened, he balked. Pombo appealed to Gingrich for help, but Gingrich left them to fight it out. Pombo lost, in a fairly fought floor vote, 227-196. Pombo was livid. In a

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meeting described as "angry" and "emotional," Pombo wailed at Gingrich for "selling him down the river." Gingrich promised to make Boehlert "irrelevant" to environmental policy, according to an account in *The Hill*.

Gingrich's sympathies were probably with Boehlert, but that's not why he stayed out of it. It was a sober political decision: Pombo's bill never had enough support anyway, in the House or the country. "Hell would have frozen over before most of us would not support Boehlert's effort," says Shays.

The Rebels have announced only one potential strategy, and it's stunningly stupid. They emerged from their now-infamous June 11 meeting with Armey determined to add combustible amendments to necessary spending bills. All spikes are being considered, from abortion to defunding the National Education Association to the Census and government shutdown again. That Armey would even consider the spike strategy is amazing; it is precisely this strategy that backfired so disastrously in 1995. Gingrich is now meeting with the Rebels separately, to get them to hold off.

But few will listen. The mob against the speaker has its own momentum. Gingrich may be statesman by default now, but he is no more viable. In fact, his calmness is a sign of mortality. That his troops won't even listen to him when he's right means that self-consuming chaos has fully taken over the Republican House. Now is the quiet before the storm. Not long ago, Republican Bob Ney emerged from a leadership meeting. Ney is a happy guppy in a sea of sharks, among the nicest members of a notably nasty House. "We are learning to communicate with each other," he said, hopefully. "It's all civil, quite civil.... We've learned to disagree amicably, I think." And as the door opened behind him, you could see the shadow of one of the members still disagreeing amicably in the meeting room, a sharp-nosed man jabbing his fingers at some imaginary point, inches from someone else's face. •

Clinton's budget co-dependency.

THE ENABLER

By Jonathan Chait

President Clinton must wonder why the Republicans don't act the way they used to, during the heady, romantic days of their early courtship. This spring they had a secret rendezvous, lavishly complimented each other on their exquisite bipartisanship and eventually announced to the world that they had joined forever in fiscal matrimony. Alas, those days of wine and roses lasted hardly any time at all, and now the marriage is dysfunctional. Every week, Congress finds a new way to poison the deal for the president. Every week, Clinton responds with a little complaining and a little rationalizing. The Republicans, he moans, are back to their dastardly old ways: exploding the deficit, denying their tax cuts to all but the wealthiest and slighting his priorities. "The plans put together by the House and Senate committees simply do not live up to the explicit commitment of the budget agreement, and that is wrong," Clinton complained recently. But lest anybody reach the natural conclusion—that the budget deal is not worth the price—he grows defensive. "If we abandon the agreement," he told *The Wall Street Journal*, "I don't see how we're ever going to get to a balanced budget."

Apparently, the president has no choice but to suffer these wrongs. In the budgetary relationship between the GOP and the president, the Republicans have established themselves as the abusive spouse—but it's the president who really keeps it going: in pop-psychology terms, he is the enabler. Like an alcoholic's wife, he may complain and nag, but he can't bring himself to leave. The vices of his partner reinforce his estimate of his own virtue, feeding the president's addiction to high self-esteem.

Clinton's co-dependency with GOP budget makers began the day he cut a deal with Bill Archer, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Clinton essentially gave Archer carte blanche to rewrite the tax code any way he wanted, so long as he set aside some money for Clinton's own tax cuts and the total cost didn't exceed $85 billion within five years and $250 billion within ten years. Clinton's tax officials claimed these guidelines would keep the size of the tax cut in check and ensure that a good portion of it would go to not-super-rich taxpayers—all the while maintaining some semblance of fiscal responsibility.

Now, it's important to keep in mind that Bill Archer is good at one thing in this world, and that thing is backloading tax cuts for his well-heeled constituents. Backloading is the dark art of concocting immense tax cuts that, due to their timing, cost the government very little money in the short run and tons of money in the long run. Since budgets only include short-run costs to the government, long-term tax costs are, for the purposes of the legislator at the moment, essentially free.

So Archer, handed the key to the liquor cabinet by Clinton, got drunk on tax cuts. He wrote a tax bill that largely complied with the budget agreement, but it was so backloaded that it nearly tripled in cost right after the ten-year limit expired, and nearly all that cost went into the pockets of the top stratum. Archer probably assumed that this was what Clinton expected of him.

From there, the co-dependency cycle played out in textbook fashion. Initially Clinton professed shock—the Republican plan, he lamented, "does not meet the standards of fairness to families and promotion of education"—but he couldn't bring himself to break the whole thing off. Meanwhile, the Republicans, stung by the mere suggestion they were fiscal abusers, threw a fit anyway. The leadership began blast-faxing bogus

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charts purporting to contradict Clinton's mild reproach. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott snarled that Clinton had been a "spoiled brat."

When the enabler's nagging provokes the troubled spouse to lash back, it's the enabler's job to make the peace. Clinton did just that, reasoning in classic battered-spouse fashion that Lott was entitled to call him a spoiled brat:

> "If you're having a bad week and you do the Sunday talk shows and your colleagues start grinding on you and you're dead tired because instead of getting a lot of sleep on Saturday night you have to get up and be beat around the head for a while, there's no telling what you're going to say."

And in the same *Wall Street Journal* interview, the president began to parrot the excuses that Republicans themselves had employed. "The revenue loss here, over ten years, is one-tenth, in constant dollars, what the 1981 tax cut was, in a much bigger economy," Clinton insisted.

It's a lame defense: the 1981 tax cut was immediately followed by a tax hike the next year that made up for most of the lost revenue. And the costs of this year's tax cuts don't shoot through the roof until *after* ten years, so the relevant comparison is the revenue loss over the *next* ten years.

But never mind that. Clinton stood by his man. He says he's committed to the accord because budget balance is so important. Yet in order to preserve the agreement, he's willing to live with tax cuts that—once fully phased in—will cost the government as much as $70 billion a year, which is more than the annual deficit.

"The distribution pattern of any tax plan will look somewhat skewed to upper-income people if there is any kind of capital-gains-tax and estate-tax relief in it," Clinton concedes. "But that was the price of the agreement." Those Republicans are brutish, all right. But what is Clinton supposed to do? Leave them? The important thing, after all, is to keep the relationship together. It's for the children's sake. •

MOUNT VERNON POSTCARD

SLAVERY CHIC

By Stephen Glass

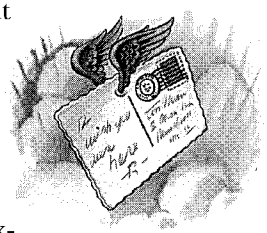
In think tanks, on Capitol Hill, even at political magazines, summer interns complain they get treated like slaves. At a summer program on the grounds of Mount Vernon, that's the point. Or at least it's supposed to be. As part of a program called "George Washington: Pioneer Farmer," seven college students are spending the summer on what's left of the first president's Virginia plantation, supposedly living their lives much as his slaves did 200 years ago. Using Washington's own notes as a guide, they work the same fields, tend the same kinds of livestock, even don reproductions of the same knickerbockers and waistcoats Washington's hands once wore.

For the Mount Vernon tourists, these interns are part of the attraction—a living exhibit of plantation life. For the students, all of whom are white, the idea is not merely to learn about agriculture but also to experience, firsthand, slavery—the kind of culturally defining ordeal that, according to the practitioners of identity politics, whites might not otherwise grasp.

But a really authentic slave experience is hard to find. I recently spent a day working alongside the intern-slaves at Mount Vernon, and one thing was clear: the Founding Father's hands never had it this good. These slaves work no more than eight hours a day, and they get weekends and evenings off. They have private rooms, with indoor plumbing. They enjoy television and the Internet, and, when they wish for music, they switch on their boom boxes instead of strumming on their old banjos. And, oh yes, they are paid $200 per week—the same princely sum as a TNR intern.

Actually, the slaves at Mount Vernon aren't even called "slaves." One intern told me that label was "class-sist"; another said it was "imposed" and Eurocentric, arguing that slaves should have the right to choose their own labels. And still another said it "really keeps you down." The preferred term is "field worker." Apparently that denotes the nature of the work, not the level of social standing. Progressive labor laws make another essential aspect of slavery illegal—corporal punishment. In fact, there's no hostility between the taskmasters and the slaves. And since Mount Vernon doesn't offer overtime, the only incentive is that they get to take back to college a set of authentic garb, stitched by an Indiana company that specializes in early American clothing.

In fairness, the work isn't easy. Over the course of a day, each slave works at about five different tasks. I was horrible at all of them. My day started near the barn, where a fellow slave asked me to watch a lamb that within a few seconds had bolted for the wheat fields. I thought about letting the lamb go free, out of solidarity. But the animal stopped after a few yards and wandered back. It was no better a runaway than I was a slave.



I didn't fare much better as a tour guide-slave. As Jimmy Guckman, a junior tourist from Los Angeles, petted the lamb's soft pelt, I imparted a bit of knowledge. "That's where cotton comes from," I said. The 5-year-old, a surprisingly well-informed young fellow, rolled his eyes at me. "Ya mean wool," he said. Right. Wool.

My lack of farm knowledge wasn't the only betrayal of inauthenticity. Although the adults rarely mentioned it, kids quickly noticed the obvious fact that not one of us was black. When I asked John Riley, Mount

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Vernon's assistant to the director, about the discrepancy, he became a little defensive. Mount Vernon, he insisted, is an equal opportunity employer. It just seems Washington's farm has a hard time attracting black slaves. Mount Vernon seems uneasily aware of its vulnerability to charges of institutional racism in its color-blind slave program. In conversations with several program officials, I got the clear impression that Mount Vernon would greet any black applicant with great eagerness, possibly even preferential treatment. "We'd like to have minorities here," said one official. "I'm sure if we knew the applicant was black, we'd help them along. It would be great for us, and for them." It's come to this: affirmative action on the plantation.

Here, however, Mount Vernon runs into another problem. The most efficient way to meet affirmative action goals is to set lower standards for minority hires. But Mount Vernon maintains standards that are quite exclusionary. Not just anybody gets to be a slave; the plantation only considers applicants who have agricultural experience. Such restrictions may unfairly discriminate against black applicants. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, only 18,816 of America's 1,925,300 farms, or 1 percent, are operated by blacks. Although there are certainly blacks who work on farms but don't own them, the pool of black applicants who can meet Mount Vernon's agricultural requirement is obviously far smaller than that of whites.

Even for those applicants who make it past this hurdle, the competition is fierce: in recent years, as many as 400 students have applied for the handful of slots. Each applicant wrote an essay and submitted at least two letters of recommendation. The program accepts about 5 percent of the applicants, making it more selective than the Ivy League.

Alas, such competition yields a crop of slaves who seem more concerned with cultivating their résumés than their wheat. "I don't think anyone here wants to go into this field full time," explained Kara David, an intern from Texas. Most hope to attend graduate school, or land high-paying jobs in agribusiness. "I think it will really show that I am dedicated to my job," says another intern. "I mean it will demonstrate that I will break my back working hard for them."

Well, not really *break*. More like slightly strain. When it began raining later in the day, the slaves ditched their posts and searched for cover, abandoning a family of tourists near the fields. That left program developer Sandy Newton to make sure the tourists found shelter. After that, she had to run through the soaked fields—petticoat, bonnet and all—in order to save the fragile and expensive scarecrows from the strong winds.

After the rain subsided, the slaves eventually wandered back. A few confessed that they had lingered away from work simply because slavery can be "boring." "I guess I can relate to them," one said. "For slaves, every day was the same routine. Each day was just another day, another dollar." Only without the dollar. •

CCRI's short coattails.

No initiative

By John J. Miller

Glynn Custred and Tom Wood should be two of the most triumphant men in American politics right now. As coauthors of the California Civil Rights Initiative, they saw many years of work pay off last fall when California voters approved Proposition 209, banning racial, ethnic and gender preferences in state government. This was supposed to be the summer of Custred and Wood's content, a time to kick back and watch the entire country follow California's lead.

But it hasn't worked out that way. By the end of 1997, none of the twenty-four states that allow initiatives will have put a version of CCRI before voters. According to activists, politicians in Arizona, Georgia, Missouri, New Jersey and elsewhere introduced bills repealing preferences earlier this year, but none of those measures has gotten past the state legislatures, and, most likely, none will. No other governor has followed California's Pete Wilson in signing an executive order limiting color-conscious public policy. President Clinton continues to support preferences, while Republicans in Congress continue to keep the issue off the legislative calendar. "I really thought we had handed the Republicans a marvelous opportunity to run on the core principles of individual rights and equality before the law," says Custred, an anthropology professor at Cal State-Hayward. "But they turned their backs on us and scampered away."

Speaker Newt Gingrich has said that a federal version of CCRI is not a priority. In fact, in the first several months of the new session Gingrich made a point of openly flirting with opponents of the referendum. He invited Jesse Jackson to sit in the speaker's box during the State of the Union address in January; he spoke of re-funding the Congressional Black Caucus and other groups that lost their public subsidies more than two years ago when the GOP took control of Congress. Gingrich also has boasted of his ability to marginalize Republican Congressman Charles Canady of Florida, the sponsor of a bill barring preferences in the federal government.

Other leading Republicans also have avoided the preference issue. For more than two weeks before President Clinton gave his much-hyped San Diego speech on race, conservative activists had encouraged the GOP to prepare a formal reply—perhaps even to allow former CCRI co-chair Ward Connerly to deliver the Republicans' weekly radio address on it, since this would air on the same day as Clinton's speech. But Senate Majority Leader

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Trent Lott instead devoted his broadcast to tax cuts. And when Utah Republican Senator Orrin Hatch held Judiciary Committee hearings on racial preferences the following Monday, only two other senators showed up. One of them was a Democrat.

This policy of malign neglect has trickled down to GOP functionaries at the state level. "I've detected a softening on this issue," says Tom Tancredo, who may help lead an effort to put anti-preference language on the Colorado ballot next year. His state's House of Representatives actually passed a bill to ban preferences in February, but the bill died in the Republican-controlled Senate. In Ohio, organizers don't know whether they can count on the likely GOP candidate for governor, Secretary of State Bob Taft (great-grandson of the twenty-seventh president), who has not made public statements on the issue and—according to one local activist—has said Ohio doesn't need anything like CCRI.

Florida's Republicans have been particularly unhelpful. Jeb Bush, the failed GOP candidate for governor in 1994 and likely nominee next year, has reportedly put out the word that he does not want anti-preference measures on the ballot because they might alienate Miami's Cuban voters. John Barry, an Orlando businessman trying to duplicate CCRI's success, has been the subject of big stories in most major Florida newspapers. But he says the state GOP won't return his calls.

For opponents of preference-based policies, this is a near-fatal blow. Fund-raising for this issue is difficult—right now it's done mainly through small-dollar direct-mail appeals, since no corporations and few high-profile financiers want to be associated with it. Ties to the local GOP would build credibility in the eyes of these potential donors; GOP backing would also inoculate supporters against allegations of racism. Keep in mind that it was only after Pete Wilson made the issue a top concern and encouraged his friend Connerly to get involved that the CCRI movement became financially stable. Concludes Wood, "None of these initiatives will succeed unless the Republican Party at the state and national levels gets in line with the grass-roots and decides to lead them."

The news for those opposing preferences is not all bad, however. In April, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled strongly in favor of CCRI's constitutionality. Although the legal odyssey of Prop 209 is probably not over, the law can finally go into effect, and this may spark renewed interest. "A lot of people were ready to move on this issue but wanted to see whether the California law would stand up in court," says Greg Smith of the American Legislative Exchange Council, which tracks legislation in state capitals. "I think we're going to see a lot of activity next year."

Already, it looks like grass-roots activists in Houston will succeed in placing a CCRI knock-off on their city ballot in November. Early polls suggest strong support, even though blacks and Hispanics make up the majority of Houston's population. In Washington state, where a signature drive just began, the entire GOP apparatus is firmly anti-preference. If volunteers gather enough signatures by January—and they likely will—the Republican-controlled state legislature will either vote color-blind public policy into law immediately (which it can do with a two-thirds majority in both houses and without the approval of the governor, who is a Democrat) or let it go before voters in the fall.

Congress, though, remains a roadblock. Canady reintroduced his bill, now called the Civil Rights Act of 1997, on June 17. Republican Senators Hatch and Mitch McConnell of Kentucky have taken the lead in their chamber, but as of this writing, it looked like Lott might let the bill go to a hostile Labor Committee that will almost surely ignore it. In the House, Illinois Republican Henry Hyde will get the bill; he is eager to report it out of his Judiciary Committee. But while Gingrich endorsed the Civil Rights Act in a well-publicized speech on June 18, and has promised a floor vote on it within eighteen months, he reportedly does not want to threaten the fragile bipartisan coalition he built around another bill that would create enterprise zones and sponsor school choice in low-income communities. Three black Democrats recently announced their support for this piece of legislation, bucking both the NAACP and the teachers unions, and the House leadership is worried that an aggressive anti-preferences campaign would jeopardize the consensus.

The congressional Republicans cannot dodge the issue for long. Later this year, Congress is due to reauthorize transportation spending—legislation that traditionally has included tons of racial, ethnic and gender set-asides. Highway money is a bread-and-butter issue to most members, and the final product always involves complicated bargaining to ensure that everyone gets their pork. If a few back-benchers offer anti-preference amendments late in the game, they will force their colleagues to choose between sacrificing a hard-won deal or positively affirming their support for set-asides in a recorded vote. Gingrich doesn't want a fight over preferences to break out in this context, but he may not have much say in the matter. In the wake of the Supreme Court's 1995 *Adarand* decision, it is difficult for lawmakers to ignore the High Court's manifest desire that the federal government be severely restricted in straying from the principle of race neutrality.

Republicans nervous about the gender gap and their anti-minority image are reluctant to draw sharp distinctions between themselves and a Democratic president contemplating an apology for slavery. Forget the fact that 27 percent of California's black voters, along with a slim majority of California women (and nearly 60 percent of white California women), voted in favor of Prop 209, or that CCRI outperformed Bob Dole by roughly a three-to-one margin among black voters in the state. The anti-preference movement is at a standstill. "This is one of those rare instances in which good policy and good politics are joined at the hip," says Custred. "Why doesn't anybody understand this?"

JOHN J. MILLER is vice president of the Center for Equal Opportunity, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank.

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THE DAYTON GAME

By Susan Ellingwood

The news, reported several weeks ago, that Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright were arguing over whether NATO should use force to implement the Dayton peace accords, was treated as a classical Washington power-play story, a story of two titans of the game positioning for primacy over a disputed policy. "The long-simmering policy debate," wrote *The New York Times*, "finally came to a boil."

The Albright-Cohen feud, however, is about something much more serious than a Beltway power struggle, or even a dispute over the best method of implementing U.S. policy. It is about what U.S. policy actually is. The confusion is rooted in the Dayton accords, a document whose purposeful ambiguity created a Bosnia policy with a gaping hole at its center. In the Clinton administration's haste to reach an agreement between Bosnia's warring factions before the 1996 election, the U.S. negotiators at Dayton, led by then-Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, deliberately papered over the most critical question: How do you enforce a peace without force? The result is a document that means whatever anyone wants it to mean. Interventionists and hawks like Albright can find in it instruction to use whatever force is necessary. Powellists and isolationists like Cohen can find in it instruction to do nothing at all.

As a result, ever since the accords were signed in December of 1995, the Defense and State departments have pursued two conflicting strategies. Though both strategies ostensibly seek the same goals, the Pentagon has adopted a no-force strategy toward these goals, hoping instead for a political agreement among the warring factions and a quick exit for U.S. troops. The State Department has argued that some measure of force is necessary for any effective police action, and is not averse to the idea of a prolonged U.S. military presence.

The trouble with the State Department's approach is that President Clinton and Congress refuse to make a long-term commitment. The problem with the Defense Department's is that two of the three parties to the conflict in Bosnia have rejected the political solution. And so, in the year and a half since the Dayton accords were signed, only nine of the seventy-five people indicted for war crimes in the conflict have been brought into custody. The at-large indictees are open in their contempt for the authorities. When an arrest warrant was issued for Serb leader Milan Martic, he reportedly warned, "an attempt to arrest me would be a kind of terrorism, and it should be responded to in the way it deserves."

Martic can safely sneer because the Dayton accords protect him by intentionally evading the question of who would arrest him. In the 149-page document, only one sentence even deals with war criminals—Article IX—and it reads like a parody of Blackstone's *Commentaries*: "The Parties shall cooperate fully with all entities involved in implementation of this peace settlement, as described in the Annexes of this Agreement, or which are otherwise authorized by the United Nations Security Council, pursuant to the obligation of all parties to cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law." What this sentence means is that the parties responsible for arresting suspected war criminals in the Bosnian conflict are, in the case of the higher-level suspects, the war criminals themselves.

The American negotiators purposely "used language that was overly vague," says Paul Williams, the lawyer representing the Bosnia delegation in Dayton. "They made it vague because they wanted the Serbs to sign ... but they compromised so much that it is not really implementable." John Fox, a former State Department official, says that the agreement's failure to be more explicit about the apprehension of war criminals has actually helped maintain the criminal power structure. Because U.S. officials "didn't go after the war criminals," says Fox, "they didn't break the power of this Mafia."

This vagueness made it easy for NATO, which was supposed to be the enforcement mechanism, to dodge any responsibility. NATO policy states that its troops—the Implementation Force (IFOR) and now the Stabilization Force (SFOR)—are "authorized to detain and transfer to [the tribunal at The Hague] persons indicted for war crimes when [soldiers] come in contact with them while carrying out their normal duties and if the operational situation so permits." But what exactly are their "normal duties"? The "Soldier's Instructions" card for dealing with Persons Indicted For War Crimes (PIFWC) states that: "The course of your regular duties does NOT include hunting or searching for PIFWC. Unless you receive orders to the contrary.... " No such orders have been given.

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Holbrooke now claims that the language of Dayton clearly authorized NATO forces to hunt and arrest war criminals. "Dayton fully authorizes IFOR and now SFOR to take whatever actions they deem necessary," Holbrooke insists. But this is a fudge, and Holbrooke must know it; Dayton may have *authorized* NATO forces to take the necessary actions, but it didn't *order* them to do so, and orders are what soldiers follow. Holbrooke himself glancingly acknowledges the crucial distinction, saying of the NATO forces that there is "no question they have the authority to arrest, but it's a question of authority versus obligation."

The military forces in Bosnia, including outgoing NATO commander General George Joulwan, concede that they have the capacity to arrest war criminals, but, until they are given the authority to do so, they will continue to abide by Dayton, which is to say, do nothing. According to observers in Bosnia, SFOR is not only not searching for war criminals, but actively avoiding them. "The parties simply are not implementing the major aspects of [Dayton] on their own," says Mort Abramowitz, the former president of the Carnegie Endowment. Even Holbrooke seems to recognize Dayton's failures. Asked what he would have done differently, he says that he would have rewritten Annex 11 of the agreement, which deals with the creation of an International Police Task Force (IPTF)—a force that could have brought some muscle to the accords. As it stands, the IPTF is made up of United Nations volunteers whose only requirement for enlistment, says one source ruefully, is an ability to operate a four-wheel drive.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Eight months ago, sources say, State Department officials became so desperate for some kind of action that they floated a secret plan to use SFOR to secure a building where known war criminals were said to be hiding. The scheme called for a superforce to storm the building and arrest the indictees. This was an interagency plan that was being worked out with the IFOR and SFOR field commanders as well as with officials at the war crimes tribunal. But, like so many other attempts to use the kind of force that might make a difference, this plan was shelved.

Instead, many U.S. officials insist economic pressure will suffice. But this is clearly failing. Days before the State Department's approval in June of a $13 million loan to Croatia for economic development, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman responded by defying the accords. "Nobody in the world can force us" to allow 200,000 displaced Serbs to return to their homes, he declared.

While the parties continue to flout the agreement, the mood in Washington is shifting toward retreat. On June 24, the House voted to cut off funds for U.S. troops in Bosnia after June 1998. A much tougher alternative amendment that called for a U.S. withdrawal by December of this year was rejected by only thirty-five votes. And even though Pentagon officials privately admit that without its troops the fighting will resume, Secretary Cohen recently told *The New York Times*, "My position has been that in June of '98 the mission is over." Meanwhile, SFOR trains and equips the Muslims and Croats to fight more efficiently. "The June withdrawal of forces will very likely lead to the resumption of hostility," laments Abramowitz.

The administration's last-ditch hope is that the Europeans will stay on after a U.S. withdrawal. But the Europeans continue to harbor a fatalistic view of Dayton, saying that it will never work without a strong U.S. presence. In a statement issued at the recent Summit of Eight, the leaders warned that their "continued commitment is not unconditional."

Two years ago, Holbrooke would stop at nothing to get the agreement signed and to insure his place in the history books. He did that, and then walked away. But now the cynicism of the accords lies exposed. Dayton rested on an idea manifest in its falseness, that justice could be enforced without force, that the criminals would police themselves. If Dayton fails, it will be clear why. •

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China bonds with Hong Kong's underworld.

PARTNERS IN CRIME

By Fredric Dannen

I was interviewing Hong Kong tycoon Albert Yeung in his office on a recent afternoon when he suddenly changed the subject to ask whether I knew that his forebears had come from Chiu Chow, a region in south China famous for breeding tough guys. A Chiu Chow is the Chinese equivalent of a Sicilian. I took the bait, and told Yeung that some people had advised me to stay away from him because he was reputed to be a dangerous man. He did not even try to conceal his delight. "Do I look dangerous to you?" he asked, with a mischievous laugh.

Yeung is the chairman of Emperor Group, a huge Hong Kong consortium involved in real estate, financial services, watches and jewelry, publishing and other businesses. He does not look dangerous. He is 52, a small man, lively, with a boyish face. If he looks anything, it's rich. He wears hand-tailored suits and shirts and A. Testoni shoes that cost as much as $2,000 a pair. He owns a fleet of Rolls-Royces and Mercedes, all with expensive license plates. (Hong Kong businessmen are big on lucky numbers, and coveted plates are auctioned to the highest bidder.) In March 1994, Yeung paid $1.7 million for a plate bearing the single digit "9," which was considered especially lucky because the Cantonese word for nine sounds like the word for dog, and it was the Year of the Dog.

But Yeung's reputation, at least to some, is indeed that of a dangerous man. Emperor is Hong Kong's leading player in the foreign exchange market, and one of Yeung's top currency traders was a man named Michael Lam. In November 1994, Lam went to work for a competitor of Yeung's. On December 9, Lam returned to his old office at Emperor to ask for unpaid salary and bonuses, and was told to meet Yeung that evening at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. Lam and other eyewitnesses later informed the police that the meeting turned ugly. "You are a bloody guy," Yeung was reported to have told Lam, seething. "You will lose your left leg." Yeung allegedly escorted Lam out of the hotel with his arm around Lam's shoulder—a signal of peace to a group of men surrounding the hotel. "Otherwise," Yeung is said to have warned Lam, "my guys outside will put you in real trouble."

The men surrounding the hotel were believed to be triads, so-named for their membership in Chinese secret triad societies. Triads are the world's largest criminal fraternity, and Hong Kong, with four major triad societies and numerous smaller ones, is home to more ethnic Chinese gangsters than anywhere else on earth. One society, the Sun Yee On, has by itself at least 30,000 members, and possibly 60,000. The low estimate is larger than the Hong Kong Police Force, and the high estimate is equal to nearly one out of every fifty males in Hong Kong. (Women can't be triads, but boys as young as 10 are recruited by all the major societies.) Apart from running the rackets in Hong Kong—illegal gambling and prostitution, for instance—triads are active in legitimate enterprises, such as the property market and public transportation. Meanwhile, their powerful influence is felt worldwide in counterfeiting, arms dealing, alien smuggling and money laundering. Hong Kong is a key transit point for the Southeast Asian heroin and methamphetamine that pour into the United States, and triads play a key role in the drugs' transshipment. Triad societies are more loosely structured than Mafia families; the benefit of membership is solidarity, the ease of finding criminal partners and the threat that one's triad brothers can be called upon to perform acts of violence. And triad violence tends to be gruesome because of a tradition of using a meat cleaver, or "chopper"; the chopping off of one or another limb is a trademark triad method of registering disapproval.

Michael Lam therefore may have had good reason to fear for his leg. As it turned out, he suffered no serious bodily harm, but he told the police that his ordeal continued after he left the hotel. He said he was escorted back to his old office, where he was held captive overnight and forced to kneel and serve tea. To further humiliate him, he claimed, Yeung threatened to order the most junior employee on the premises to slap Lam twice in the face.

The following day, December 11, Lam's new boss tipped off the police, and five eyewitnesses from the hotel and the office, including Lam, were promptly summoned to give statements. The police were already familiar with Albert Yeung. According to press reports, in 1980, Yeung, then a member of the Royal Hong Kong

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Jockey Club, tried to persuade the victim of an assault by a jockey not to testify and spent six months in jail for attempting to pervert the course of justice. In 1986, he was convicted of illegal bookmaking and given a suspended sentence of six months. In March 1994, former Brooklyn Congressman Stephen J. Solarz was forced to withdraw his bid to become U.S. ambassador to India because he'd had business dealings with Yeung. Solarz protested that he had believed Yeung to be "totally respectable," until the American consul in Hong Kong told him that Yeung was a triad. Solarz says he confirmed this accusation to his satisfaction and immediately severed all ties to Yeung. Yeung denies that he is a triad, or that he is involved in criminal activities, and he attributes the charge to "jealousy" over his success in business.

Three days after Lam went to the police, Yeung was relaxing at a karaoke club with one of Emperor's business partners, the film star Jackie Chan, when he was arrested by officers from the Organized Crime and Triad Bureau and charged with criminal intimidation and false imprisonment. He went on trial the following May. Lam was the first eyewitness to be called, and he proved useless to the prosecution. He said his heart was beating fast, and added, "I am very frightened. I do not want to give evidence." The next eyewitness, a friend of Lam's who had provided a detailed statement to the police just five months earlier, claimed he could no longer remember the incident—his memory, he said, had been impaired by an anesthetic he'd been given to treat a football injury. After the other three eyewitnesses also complained of memory loss, the judge dismissed the charges, declaring, "I cannot be sure justice has been done." The press was sarcastic. "To have five cases of amnesia in two days is terrible," editorialized the *South China Morning Post*, Hong Kong's largest English-language daily.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the entire affair never made it into the press. Earlier this year, I met privately with one of the officers who arrested Yeung, and he explained why the police waited three full days to take action. "That's how long it took for me to get permission to arrest Albert," he told me, in tones of disgust. "In spite of the blatant nature of the offense, the boss wanted to get legal advice first. And when Albert was led away, a police inspector actually uncuffed him. This is the police force we're facing now"—that is, in the days leading up to Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty. Why was Yeung, who had done jail time in the past, accorded such special treatment? This reputed organized-crime figure has become rather tight with the men who run the People's Republic of China and who will, after July 1, gain sovereignty over Hong Kong. Indeed, Yeung's arrest was inconveniently timed—it caused Beijing to hastily cancel a scheduled meeting between Yeung and President Jiang Zemin.

Beijing seems to have forgiven Yeung for that small embarrassment. When I visited Yeung, he handed me Emperor's glossy brochure, which was filled with photographs of himself posing with senior officials of the central Chinese government, some of whom are his business partners. Yeung has been cultivating his relationships with top Chinese government and party officials for years. He recalled to me the propitious time when he began his courtship, shortly after the Tiananmen Square massacre of June 4, 1989: "China is in very bad shape. Nobody wanted to be their friend. But we go there, one of the big tycoon from Hong Kong, and start to make friends with the top people, and invest money there. And they appreciate this." One of those appreciative friends is Xiao Yang, China's minister of justice. In November 1992, Yeung hosted a banquet in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to celebrate the launch of the first private bank in the history of the People's Republic, which Emperor and a subsidiary of the Ministry of Justice own together. The following June, the ministry became the second-largest stockholder, after Yeung himself, in Emperor International Group, the publicly traded part of Emperor Group; it purchased 84 million shares, representing 4.74 percent of the company's enlarged capital. Yeung told me that when the ministry asked to buy the stock, he broke the news to Hong Kong's Securities and Futures Commission, which had barred him from overseeing his own financial-services division because of his criminal record. "They didn't believe it," he said, laughing. Yeung carries his business relationships with the highest officials in the Chinese government as a shield against his doubters. With neatly circular logic, he argues that his influential friendships prove that he is a fit figure with whom to be friends. "If I'm a criminal, if I'm a triad," he asks, triumphantly, "how can they trust me?"

Easily, it turns out. Of all of the treacherous aspects of Hong Kong's reunification with China, the most treacherous—and the least noticed—is that it will seal what amounts to a cooperation pact between the triad societies and the Communist Party. This dreadful alliance, of the world's largest criminal underground and the world's last great totalitarian power, has received surprisingly little attention in this country, even though the U.S. Justice Department has identified triad racketeering as a significant global threat. Even more ominously, this alliance is not accidental. It was part of Deng Xiaoping's reunification plan for Hong Kong from the very beginning, and dates from the early 1980s, when China and Britain were negotiating the return of Hong Kong to the mainland in 1997.

We know this because this past May, Wong Man-fong, the former deputy secretary-general of Xinhua, China's news agency in Hong Kong (which reputedly acts as a de facto embassy), admitted it during a forum at Hong Kong's Baptist University. Wong said that in the early 1980s, at Beijing's behest, he "befriended" Hong Kong's triad bosses and made them an offer they could not refuse: China would turn a blind eye to their illegal activities if they would promise to keep peace for the handover. "I told them that, if they did not disrupt Hong Kong's stability, we would not stop them from making money," Wong said. No one knows why Wong made this astounding disclosure about China's secret

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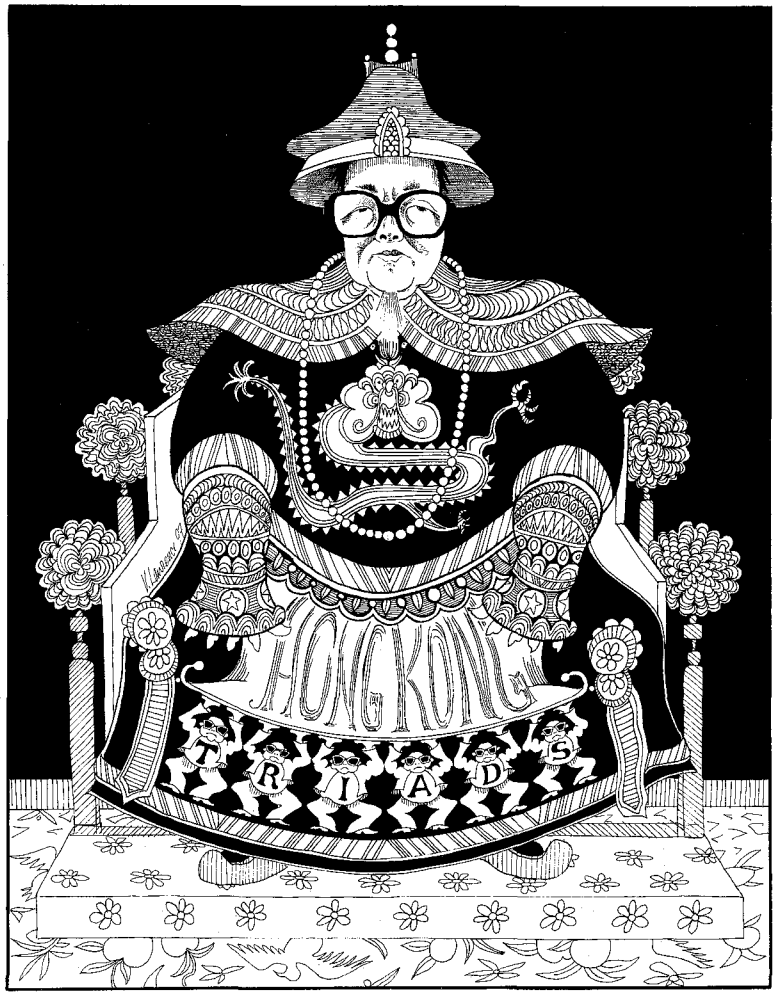
dealings with crime bosses, but there is even more to the story than he acknowledged. In the past few years, Hong Kong triads, emboldened by their friendship with the Communist Party, have expanded their illegal activities into China. Today, the four major triad societies of Hong Kong—the Sun Yee On, the 14K, the Wo Shing Wo and the Wo Hop To—have outposts in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and other mainland cities, and are expanding in size and power at an impressive rate.

The West's apparent blindness to the ramifications of a working alliance between a great power and a great criminal network is striking for its persistence. Deng had been openly hinting at an underworld accord for years. In September 1983 and June 1984, while China was still negotiating with Britain to regain Hong Kong, and again in early October 1984, only days after a handover agreement had been reached, he made remarks about triads at the Great Hall of the People that were surprisingly and pointedly positive. On each occasion, he promised that China would allow Hong Kong to govern itself as long as its administrators were Chinese "patriots" who cherished the mainland; and each time, he spontaneously brought up the subject of the triad societies, whose power in Hong Kong, he pointed out, was "very great." Of course, he said, not all triads were bad. Many of them were good. Many of them, he said, were patriotic.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

At the time, a lot of people dismissed this as an old man's mysterious mumbling. Patriotic gangsters? It was true that triads had originated as a nationalist movement, but that was long ago. The first triads, according to legend, were seventeenth-century monks intent on overthrowing the Manchus, who had conquered China in 1644 and established the Qing Dynasty. (To this day, triads lean heavily toward Buddhist mysticism.) By the nineteenth century, however, the Manchus were still in power, and the triad movement had largely degenerated into a criminal underground, based primarily in Hong Kong and Shanghai. The Qing Dynasty was toppled at long last in 1911, when Dr. Sun Yat-sen—himself a triad—and his followers established the Republic of China. In 1927, another triad-turned-political-leader, Chiang Kai-shek, recruited members of his Shanghai triad society, the murderous Green Gang, to put down China's emerging Communist Party; in April of that year, the Green Gang slaughtered Communists by the hundreds. When the Communists finally seized power in 1949, hordes of Shanghai triads fled for their lives to Hong Kong, establishing that territory once and for all as the world headquarters of Chinese organized crime. After that, the triad societies of Hong Kong, with few exceptions, professed allegiance to the Republic of Taiwan and regarded the Communist Party as a bitter ideological enemy. So, in spite of Deng's cryptic comments, Hong Kong savants predicted for years that, by the time China took over Hong Kong, the triads would have fled a Communist crackdown by emigrating to the four corners of the world.

The experts overlooked Deng's pragmatism. One of his best-known sayings was "It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice." He apparently reasoned that the triads were too significant a power in Hong Kong to be ignored, and that their traditional ties to Taiwan made them unpredictable, but that, fortunately, they could be bought. So he bought them: the Sun Yee On, the largest Hong Kong triad society, no longer requires initiates to pledge allegiance to Taiwan; now it is to the People's Republic of China that they swear.

Deng was also a great believer in crony capitalism. (Another of his famous sayings, "To get rich is glorious," sounds a lot less like Communist ideology than it does the triad credo.) Since the early 1980s, a number of government departments have been allowed to invest in private enterprise, with business partners of their choosing, even from outside China. Among the departments that have done so are the Ministry of Justice; the Public Security Bureau, China's national police force; and the People's Liberation Army, China's military. The PLA in

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particular has pursued Deng's get-rich philosophy with a vengeance—its multibillion-dollar portfolio includes hotels, cellular-phone networks, airlines and pro-basketball teams. It has been widely reported (see "The Betrayal of Hong Kong" by Stan Sesser, TNR, March 10) that Hong Kong's merchant class has invested heavily with mainland officials and cadres as a means of establishing good *guanxi*—the Mandarin word for "political connections." It is less well known that Hong Kong's gangster class has done the same.

Among the most popular ventures shared by Chinese officials and Hong Kong triads are the businesses that triads know best—nightclubs, karaoke bars and brothels. In Shanghai, where the People's Liberation Army owns a string of nightclubs with the Sun Yee On triad society, and where the Public Security Bureau operates several high-class houses of prostitution (including one called the Protected Secret Club), the parallels to the roaring '20s are unmistakable. In those days, the military and the police joined with the Green Gang in the very same endeavors.

Shenzhen, the south China city just across the border from Hong Kong, is the largest outpost for triads operating in the mainland. Called "the city that Deng built," Shenzhen became the late chairman's first laboratory of experimental capitalism in 1979. Since then, it has been utterly transformed, from a quiet village of rice paddies to a noisy, booming metropolis of 3.5 million people, replete with skyscrapers, shopping malls, discos, high-tech manufacturing, a stock exchange and even a Disneyland-style theme park. It has also experienced a dizzying rise in violent crime and drug abuse, and has some of the pushiest hookers in the world. Here, too, the triad pimps are operating with the government. In a recent issue of *Apple Daily*, Hong Kong's leading Chinese-language newspaper, a reputed member of the 14K triad society boasted that he and his triad brothers had established "terrific *guanxi*" with Communist officials, and cited a thriving partnership in cross-border prostitution.

Vice rackets are not the only such partnerships. Chinese officials and Hong Kong triads are believed to have joined hands in smuggling contraband in and out of China—from illegal aliens, stolen cars and bootleg cigarettes to more mundane items like air conditioners. One authority on triads says the "great fear" of the Hong Kong police is arms smuggling by triads in alliance with the People's Liberation Army. "You can't arrest a PLA officer; you can't even stop and search their wagons at the border," he says. It is possible that the worst scenario—heroin traffickers in league with mainland officials—will not occur, because the Communist government will draw the line somewhere. But no one really knows.

Nor is there any reason to think that the triads' role in the mainland will be limited to moneymaking ventures. In the aftermath of the Tiananmen massacre, a staggering number of Hong Kong citizens—as many as 1 million, or about one-sixth of the total population—marched in the streets. The protests dramatically altered China's view of Hong Kong, which until then had been seen as apolitical and concerned only with business. It was then, some believe, that China began looking seriously at triads not merely as investors, but as a means for maintaining social order. Some people are worried that the Chinese government may try to use the triad societies of Hong Kong in the way that Chiang Kai-shek used the Green Gang—as secret police.

It is not a frivolous concern. Robert Youill, a former detective inspector with the Hong Kong Police Force, and now a private eye for the Pinkerton agency in Hong Kong, told me that a few years ago he arrested a triad on a blackmail charge, and that "the guy spilled his guts, and admitted he was a spy for Xinhua, the China news agency." Lai Ting-yiu, the deputy editor-in-chief of *Next* magazine, Hong Kong's largest newsweekly, foresees triads being used by the mainland to rig district elections in Hong Kong, and to kidnap people the Communist Party wishes to punish. The latter may already have occurred: in 1993, James Peng, a naturalized Australian born in China, was abducted from a hotel room in Macao and brought to Shenzhen to stand trial for fraud—though his real crime, it appeared, was that he had offended a former business partner, Deng Xiaoping's niece. He got eighteen years in jail. His kidnappers were believed to be members of the 14K triad society.

For the United States and other parts of the world, China's accord with organized crime is cause for considerable alarm—triads are great exporters of misery. For Hong Kong, the consequences may be more immediate: the rule of law cannot long survive such an arrangement. Deng had vowed that Hong Kong's legal system and judiciary would remain essentially independent of China for fifty years after the handover, and his promise of "one country, two systems" was codified in the Basic Law, the constitution drafted by China and Britain to serve Hong Kong until the year 2047. Yet China's recognition of "good" and "patriotic" triads is itself an assault on the legal system of Hong Kong, where mere membership in a triad society has been illegal since 1845.

The disclosure this past May about Beijing's secret parlay with triad bosses provoked anger and disbelief in Hong Kong. The territory supposedly had grown complacent about its triad societies, because street crime in Hong Kong is relatively low, and because triads are said mostly to kill and maim one another. But the complacency is a myth, and so is the notion that the innocent are spared from triad violence. In January, young Sun Yee On members got into a territorial dispute with young members of the Wo Shing Wo and firebombed a karaoke club in the Kowloon district of Hong Kong. Seventeen people died. In May of last year, two days before the launch of a gossipy new Hong Kong magazine called *Surprise Weekly*, two well-dressed men walked into the office of the publisher, Leung Tin-wai, escorted him to the conference room, closed the door and sev-

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ered his left forearm with a chopper. The debut issue of *Surprise Weekly* was published on schedule, but a triad-related article was omitted. The public was outraged.

Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's incoming chief executive—handpicked by China—has made no public comment about the triad societies, and he declined to be interviewed for this article. But Tung seems far more interested in cracking down on "subversives" like Martin Lee, the eloquent barrister who heads Hong Kong's pro-human rights and pro-civil liberties Democratic Party, and who is an outspoken advocate for the rule of law, than on organized crime. Tung has already warned Lee that his public pronouncements critical of China will be "carefully read and interpreted"—a chilling admonition, in light of Article 23 of the Basic Law, which will make sedition against the mainland a crime in Hong Kong.

Tung's newly appointed attorney general, Elsie Leung, meanwhile, seems unlikely to prove much of a triad-fighter. Leung has no background in criminal law; she is a family lawyer who got her law degree by correspondence course. Her qualification for attorney general, it seems, is her love of China. She is a founding member of a pro-China political party and a member of the National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp parliament, which meets regularly in Beijing. Leung claims to see no conflict of interest in serving both as Hong Kong's top law official and China's apparatchik. Five days after being appointed attorney general, she warned that, after the handover, it may be illegal in Hong Kong to chant "Down with Li Peng"—China's prime minister, who played a central role in the Tiananmen massacre. It appears that Hong Kong will soon be a safer place for "patriotic" gangsters than "unpatriotic" barristers.

Not surprisingly, morale is rather low these days at the Organized Crime and Triad Bureau (OCTB) of the Hong Kong Police Force. Many of the bureau's veterans to whom I spoke earlier this year had recently quit that branch of the force, or had left the force altogether. "The criminals are gaining an upper hand over the police, and doing it quite quickly," one former OCTB officer told me. Those who remain in the anti-triad bureau may soon find that a lot of senior triad office-bearers are simply untouchable. Kenneth Yates, a Toronto police detective, has handled a number of Southeast Asian heroin cases with the help of the Hong Kong Police Force, which he describes as "the most professional and efficient police agency I've ever dealt with." But come the handover, he says, "You can see what's going to happen, and it's very sad. If they arrest somebody, and some bureaucrat from China says, 'You drop the charges on that guy,' they'll have to do it. We know it and they know it."

To make matters worse, the British officers who used to hold many of the senior posts on the police force have departed in droves. In anticipation of the handover, all branches of Hong Kong government have been severely "localized"—that is, Britons in positions of authority largely have been replaced with Hong Kong Chinese. The British might have stood a better chance of bucking pressure from the mainland and going after the triad bosses—it helps in such situations to have a foreign passport.

It was a former London cop named Brian "Bash" Merritt, who, as a chief superintendent in the Hong Kong police in the 1980s, led the most ambitious charge to date against a triad society. In February 1986, Anthony Chung, a former Hong Kong policeman who had become a "Red Pole"—or enforcer—for the Sun Yee On, turned himself in and asked for protection. He had run into trouble over a gambling debt with another Red Pole, and believed he was going to be chopped to death. Chung agreed to work as an undercover informant. The case was ultimately turned over to Merritt, who saw an unprecedented opportunity to attack the Sun Yee On at the very top. Chung claimed to have dealt directly with the "Dragon Head," or boss of the society, whom he identified as Heung Wah-yim.

The story of the Heung family is an illuminating one for anyone trying to understand the nature of the triad societies, and of the societies' changing relationship with the law in Hong Kong. When Anthony Chung offered his services to the police, he was given a warm reception; the police were well acquainted with the Heung family. Heung Chin, the deceased family patriarch, had founded the Sun Yee On (or New Righteous and Peaceful Society) in 1919. A native of Chiu Chow, Heung built up the Sun Yee On over the course of a half-century—he continued to call the shots from Taiwan after being deported there in the early 1950s—leaving behind an established criminal enterprise that was alleged to have been taken over by a new Dragon Head, Heung Wah-yim, his eldest son. Heung Wah-yim ostensibly worked as a law clerk for Samuel Soo and Co., a solicitor's firm, although evidence presented in court suggested that the job was merely a front. On April Fool's Day, 1987—the day was deliberate—Merritt sent a squadron of his officers to arrest eleven suspected members of the Sun Yee On, including Heung Wah-yim. The police searched Heung's law office and, in a filing cabinet, found a list of about 900 numbered names that appeared to be a membership roster of Sun Yee On office-bearers. It was a giddy moment for the police; Michael Horner, one of the arresting officers, told me he had a cardboard box placed over Heung's head as he was led away.

The following October, Heung Wah-yim was brought to trial, along with one of his sons, a son-in-law and three other alleged officers of the Sun Yee On. The five other suspects had pleaded guilty. It was billed as the biggest organized-crime trial in Hong Kong's history. The prosecutor, a burly Australian named Kevin Egan, told the court, "In a nutshell, the Crown case against Heung Wah-yim is that ... he inherited his father's title as the leader of the Sun Yee On." Egan believed his case, which was built primarily around the testimony of accomplice witnesses, was a strong one. The first of those witnesses was Anthony Chung, who described his 1981 induction ceremony, at which an official, wearing a Taoist monk's

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robe and clutching a wooden sword, lined Chung and eleven other recruits against an altar, and had them drink "red flower wine"—a mixture of Chinese wine, drops of their own blood and the blood of a freshly beheaded chicken. Two years later, he said, he was taken to meet Heung Wah-yim, who was introduced as the Dragon Head, and whose approval was required for Chung to be promoted from ordinary member to Red Pole. "I understood that he was the highest-ranking officer in the Sun Yee On," Chung told the court. A second Sun Yee On Red Pole told a nearly identical story.

Heung voluntarily took the stand in his own defense, and Kevin Egan cross-examined him for a day and a half. "He was hostile," Egan recalls. "The impression I got was, he was outraged that anyone would dare prosecute him." Heung testified that he was actually the president of a local chapter of the Lions Club, and that the list found in his office was a list of prospective donors to Chinese festivals.

On January 20, 1988, after one day of deliberation, the all-male jury convicted Heung Wah-yim, his son and son-in-law and two others of triad-related offenses; the sixth defendant was acquitted. The judge sentenced Heung to seven and a half years in prison. The police were jubilant. Using the seized name list, which the jury had effectively found to be a directory of senior Sun Yee On officials, the force turned up the pressure on the society. "We were locking up people day and night," recalls Robert Youill, the former police officer.

Heung spent the better part of two years in jail before his appeal made its way to Sir Ti-liang Yang, the chief justice of Hong Kong. Sir Ti-liang, who had been knighted by the Queen shortly before Heung was sentenced, was so tough that the Hong Kong bar dubbed his court "the Court of No Appeal." The hanging judge handed down his decision on December 13, 1989, and it was a surprise. He ruled that the name list had been wrongly admitted because the expert witnesses put on by Egan, including a staff sergeant with thirty years' experience in triad crime, were unqualified to authenticate it. He also ruled that the two Red Poles could not corroborate one another because they were fellow accomplices to the crimes being charged—a legal argument he had rejected in the past. Two British expatriate judges serving under Sir Ti-liang assented, for the most part. The jury verdict was quashed, and Heung walked out of prison, declaring, "Justice is fair."

Kevin Egan still boils at the memory of Sir Ti-liang's decision. "I thought to myself, this is a hometown verdict," he says. "Here's a notoriously right-wing judge, suddenly standing on his fucking head to let the biggest bunch of damned criminals off." Egan soon resigned as a Crown prosecutor, and became a defense attorney, with a sub-specialty in representing accused members of the Sun Yee On. "I now act for them," he told me on a recent afternoon at his law office. "I have been called a Mob lawyer." It was a humid day—like most days in Hong Kong—and Egan was wearing a lumberjack shirt open at the collar, displaying a hirsute, barrel chest and a gold chain and crucifix. He also wore a gold Rolex and a gold pinkie ring. Barristers, who argue cases in court, work in concert with solicitors, who prepare briefs, and one of the solicitors with whom Egan works regularly is Heung Wah-yim's son, Heung Chin-wai. "He's the son of the Dragon Head," Egan says.

Heung Wah-yim, now in his mid-60s, has been less active of late. Today, the most powerful of the Heungs is the tenth of the Sun Yee On founder's thirteen children. He is Charles Heung, a man in his late 40s, with slicked-back hair and a sensitive face. While in his 20s, he acted in Taiwanese kung-fu movies; in 1984, he and his brother Jimmy Heung founded a movie production company in Hong Kong called Win's Group. (Jimmy has since split with Charles to pursue non-cinematic interests.) Hong Kong is the Hollywood of Asia, the world's second-largest exporter of films after the United States, and Win's is Hong Kong's No. 1 hit-movie factory. Virtually every major star in Hong Kong, apart from Jackie Chan, has made a film for the Heungs. Charles says he and Jimmy named their company Win's because "every film is a battle." He has occasionally acted in his movies; in the 1992 gangster film *Arrest the Restless*, for instance, he played an incorruptible cop.

Charles was one of several Heung brothers identified in 1992 by the United States Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations as top office-bearers in the Sun Yee On. Two years later, a former Red Pole for the Sun Yee On, testifying in a Chinatown racketeering case in a Brooklyn federal court, identified Charles as one of "the top guys, the biggest," in the society. A year after that, the Commission for Canada sent Heung a letter rejecting his application for a visa, citing evidence "placing you squarely on the ruling council" of the Sun Yee On.

Heung agrees that his family has what he calls "a Mafia background," but says that he personally has little knowledge of such things, and has had to labor hard to overcome the stigma. "I do more work than other producer because I know the negative side, having to live under this family name," he says. He also admits that some people may fear him, but says his business philosophy is to get top actors and actresses and directors to make movies for him because they like him. "I tell you one thing, perhaps you understand a little bit," he says. "Maybe the actor shoot one film because they afraid of you. Okay. But one or two or three more, you have to give what they want."

If movie people find it agreeable to work for Heung, that is fortunate, since there are few alternatives: the film industry in Hong Kong has basically shrunk to Win's and Golden Harvest, the studio of Jackie Chan. Even a couple of years ago, when there were many more production companies, there were few alternatives to Heung for an entirely different reason. A good many of those other companies were run by triads of a particularly nasty bent, men who resorted to coercive means—including kidnapping and rape—to persuade actors and actresses to make movies for them, and Heung provided a safe refuge. Jet Li, the biggest martial-arts star in Hong

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Kong, began making movies exclusively for Heung after his manager was shot dead, in April 1992.

Though the police had no proof, a producer named Chan Chi-ming was a suspect in some of the acts of violence perpetrated against movie people in the early 1990s. "It was such an absurd situation," says movie director Gordon Chan. "Everybody hates the Heungs, but then Chan Chi-ming and the other triads get in the business, and suddenly everybody is yelling for help from the Heungs." In June 1992, Chan Chi-ming went to Shenzhen, the border town in south China, for a business deal, and was promptly arrested. He was initially arrested for arms smuggling, which carried the death penalty. Ultimately, he was charged with unlawful sexual intercourse with one of Shenzhen's many hookers. (Even though the Public Security Bureau owns brothels, extramarital sex is still officially a crime.) He was imprisoned for a year, and then released, looking, in the words of one business associate, "very pale and thin." It is widely believed that Charles Heung orchestrated Chan Chi-ming's arrest; when I asked Heung if this was true, he laughed and said his influence was not so great.

It is, though, very great, and it will be far greater still after July 1. For Charles Heung is co-owner of the Top Ten, a ritzy nightclub in Beijing, and another co-owner of the Top Ten is Tao Siju, head of the Public Security Bureau—China's chief of police. The Top Ten is a multi-story complex that includes a restaurant, a discotheque and a dozen private karaoke lounges. On April 8, 1993, only days after the Top Ten opened its doors, Tao Siju gave an informal press conference to television reporters from Hong Kong; and, after conveying the unhappy news that the "counterrevolutionaries" who protested at Tiananmen Square in 1989 would not have their long jail terms reduced, he turned his attention to the subject of triads. "As for organizations like the triads in Hong Kong, as long as these people are patriotic, as long as they are concerned with Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, we should unite with them," he said.

Charles Heung's *guanxi* is not limited to the Public Security Bureau. In August 1993, he and Jimmy Heung opened a multimillion-dollar, 200,000-square-foot movie studio in Shenzhen. Their local partner was a mainland company called the Shenzhen Donglong Group, of unknown ownership, though a possible clue was provided at the gala opening party by the presence of an illustrious guest: Ye Xuanping, a powerful Communist Party cadre and former governor of Guangdong province. In 1992, Ye's eldest son, Ye Xinlong, moved to Hong Kong; a year later, he and Charles Heung both became directors of a Hong Kong investment company.

Not surprisingly, the Hong Kong police appear simply to have given up on trying to enforce the law against the Heung family. When I attempted to pose questions about the Heungs to a senior officer in the Organized Crime and Triad Bureau, he stiffened and looked embarrassed. After I closed my notebook, he explained that if he spoke to me about the Heungs, "I will be committing suicide. I do not mean that the Heungs will kill me. I mean that my career will be finished."

On a recent afternoon, Charles Heung invited me up to his striking new corporate headquarters in Kowloon. The eye-popping decor—purple industrial chic—was suggested, he said, by his wife Tiffany, an ex-model from Taiwan. Heung asked a business associate, a man named Cecil Yow, to sit in. Yow is a bald former advertising man who speaks English with a slightly plummy British accent. As Heung gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling with his arms folded, Yow spoke of Heung's "visionary" decision to make big, bold strides into China while others were still taking cautious little steps. "Mr. Heung said, 'I must invest in China; this is going to be my future,' " Yow told me.

I asked whether Heung had difficulty making friends in China, considering his father's criminal history and close associations with Taiwan. Yow lost his cheerful demeanor for the moment. He looked over at Heung, who seemed utterly unperturbed, then cleared his throat, and said, "That's nothing. That's another generation. There's no impact, no grudge. Because Mr. Heung has done so much over the last few years to help the development of the movie industry in China. He's done coproductions with local studios that can't even pay wages. He comes in and generates revenue for them. I mean, how patriotic can you get?"

The arrangements between the triads and Beijing are not aberrant features of today's Hong Kong, but emblematic ones. Hong Kong, broadly speaking, is fast becoming a gangster society, an infinitely cynical place where nearly everyone's political allegiance seems to be for sale. Consider Tung Chee-hwa, the multimillionaire shipping magnate who is stepping in as Hong Kong's new chief executive. He also bore loyalty to Taiwan until 1985, when Beijing literally bought him away, as it had just done with the triads. Tung's late father, C.Y. Tung, who founded the family shipping empire, fled Shanghai with his then 12-year-old son in 1949 when the Communists took power, and established close ties to Taiwan; it is believed that his fleet of ships was used to transport some of the art treasures that Chiang Kai-shek looted from Beijing's Palace Museum. By the time C.Y. died in 1982, his overextended shipping empire was on the brink of bankruptcy, and, three years later, Tung Chee-hwa appealed to the Taiwanese government for a desperately needed loan. Had Taipei agreed, Tung would surely not be chief-executive-designate of Hong Kong today; but it said no, and Beijing came across with the money instead—$120 million, the third-largest government bailout of a corporation in history, after Chrysler and Lockheed.

Tung is far from the only political turncoat among Hong Kong's new power elite. Sir Ti-liang Yang, the judge who overturned the Heung conviction in 1989, is another example. Last year, he renounced his knighthood and ran as one of three candidates for Hong Kong's chief executive. Everyone knew the winner

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Dire straits

The din of Taipei traffic is decibels higher than usual these days because of a roving fleet of sound trucks. Posters on the vehicles portray Taiwan's presidential palace silhouetted against the red flag of Beijing. Loudspeakers blare out a message: "Say No to China!" This is the rallying cry for what organizers hope will be a massive demonstration in downtown Taipei, two days before the Hong Kong handover. As if to underscore the point, the long-ruling Nationalist Party (KMT) last week rolled out newly acquired F-16s, Mirages, AWACS and Patriot missiles in a "routine" two-day military exercise.

Taiwan has long been the next course on China's wish-menu: a succulent morsel, 100 miles off the coast of Fujian. Just as the absorption of Hong Kong marks the end of 150 years of colonialism, so the reincorporation of Taiwan would signal the end of seven decades of hot and cold civil war. Ever since the Communist victory in 1949, Beijing has made the return of Taiwan an even higher priority than retaking Hong Kong. China's "one country, two systems" formula was originally designed for Taiwan. Now, Mao's comrades hope to lure the Taiwanese by the happy example of post-anschluss Hong Kong.

It's a dubious proposition. Taiwan's politicians are famously disputatious (fist fights erupt regularly in parliament), but they agree on one subject: Taiwan will never submit to becoming a subordinate "system" under Beijing. Hong Kong had no choice about rejoining China, the chorus goes; Taiwan not only has a choice but a formidable high-tech army to defend itself. The choice of a majority, as measured by opinion polls, is to preserve the status quo—in other words, Taiwan's de facto separateness. While less than 10 percent want an early declaration of independence—the Taiwanese are keenly aware that anything resembling an independence bid would invite retaliation from the Chinese military—just 5 percent would opt for instant reunification with China.

Political parties here reflect this popular caution. Although the KMT pays lip service to unification as its ultimate goal and the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is publicly committed to Taiwan independence, when it comes to action, the two parties are indistinguishable. DPP legislator Parris Chang admits that the only difference between them is that the KMT calls this place the Republic of China and the DPP calls it Taiwan. "But," he adds, "we take a more anti-China line, knowing this will enhance the president's leverage with Beijing."

Taiwan does not see itself as the next Hong Kong; the plight of its neighbor evokes little empathy here. The publisher of the *Taiwan Daily*, Antonio Chiang, describes relations between Taiwanese and Hong Kongers as "mutual ignorance and mutual dislike." For the Taiwanese, Hong Kong is a shopping mall and transit lounge. Nearly 2 million Taiwanese annually pass through Hong Kong en route to China, shelling out more per day than any other visitors. Nearly a quarter of Taiwan's exports, some $27 billion worth per year, also pour through Hong Kong, with two-thirds going to China. Last month, Hong Kong passed the United States as Taiwan's biggest market.

None of this will likely change after July 1. Taiwanese ships will still sail into Hong Kong's harbor, albeit without flags, and "unofficial" Taiwanese offices in Hong Kong will remain open. For now, China has issued only one threat: a closure order on a handful of consulates belonging to countries that recognize Taiwan. A few are pulling out, but Panama faced down intimidation from Beijing and is simply converting its consulate into a travel office.

If Beijing steps up its campaign of diplomatic strangulation, Taiwan could drift further away. On the eve of a "private" visit to the United States, Foreign Minister John Chang warned, "What China is doing is helping independence advocates here." (According to a June *Asian Wall Street Journal* poll, 60 percent of Americans advocate recognition of an independent Taiwan.)

A rocky takeover in Hong Kong would hurt Taiwan's economy and might even unleash a wave of boat people from Hong Kong onto its shores. The political impact, meanwhile, could be even greater, boosting hardliners in both Beijing and Taipei. If mouthing pro-unification mantras no longer seems to be a protection for Taiwan, then the taboo on a declaration of independence could be broken.

The next worst scenario for Taiwan would be a seamlessly smooth transition in Hong Kong. This would ratchet up pressure from Taiwan's foreign friends to accept the inevitable and reach a settlement with Beijing. An unalloyed success in Hong Kong would also both reflect and reinforce positive political change in China. Under these conditions, the once unthinkable becomes possible.

Policymakers here assume that China's leader, Jiang Zemin, has too many burdens right now to bother about Taiwan. Besides showcasing Hong Kong, he needs to consolidate his power at Beijing's 15th Party Congress and then choreograph a productive visit to Washington this fall. Both Beijing and Taipei want to draw the United States into their act: China, by securing a cutback in arms sales to Taiwan; Taiwan, by getting the Americans to kick-start stalled talks between Beijing and Taipei. President Clinton's obsession with constructive engagement has only exacerbated ever-present anxieties in Taipei. "Deep in our hearts is the fear of being dumped by the United States," says one national security adviser. Taiwan's wishful alternative: "parallel engagement."

Like Jiang Zemin, Taiwan's president, Lee Teng-hui, is also distracted by domestic affairs. He was hoping to underscore Taiwan's democratic values by pushing through an ambitious constitutional reform on July 1. Now his plan is in danger of being sabotaged by dissidents in his own party. One former minister compares Lee to Mao and his reforms to a cultural revolution. Others compare him to Gorbachev and see a Yeltsin in the wings. Lee responds by calling his critics fifth columnists for Beijing.

The president has reason to be suspicious. He has been reviled by China ever since he visited Cornell University two years ago, provoking Chinese missile tests in the vicinity of Taiwan. He worries that Taiwan's investments in the mainland—$33 billion in hand, with $70 billion more contracted—are an invitation to Chinese hostage-taking, and he is trying to limit them. But Lee views himself primarily as a peacemaker. At 74, he does not expect to see the fulfillment of his main condition for unification—the democratization of China. "It's easy to build a democracy with 21 million people," he says, "but for 1.2 billion it may take 100 years." Still, he is hoping, against all odds, that as early as next year China might be ready to end the military confrontation with Taiwan. "If that happens," says Lee, "I'll go to Beijing."

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would be Tung—the race was fixed by China, which selected the 400 "voters" from Hong Kong's populace—but the former Sir Ti-liang was rewarded for helping maintain appearances, and now has a seat on Tung's cabinet. Once a champion of Hong Kong's liberal Bill of Rights, he has since lent his voice to its inevitable repeal.

I mentioned this turncoat phenomenon—which has been dubbed "instant-noodle patriotism"—to Christopher Patten, the departing British governor of Hong Kong. He smirked. "These are flip-flops of heroic proportions," Patten said. "I just don't know how people can do it—to move as it were from Buckingham Palace garden parties to the Great Hall of the People with no intervening stopping-off point."

The few who cannot be bought—Democratic Party leader Martin Lee, for instance—must seem quite an oddity to Beijing. "Once I was invited to a picnic lunch," Lee recalls, "and another guest was the vice director of Xinhua. And I heard him say, 'Quite frankly, Martin Lee is a person we can do nothing about, because he is financially independent and is not greedy for money.' That's how they put it. I don't have to sell my soul for more." Lee also makes little sense to one of his former clients, Albert Yeung of Emperor Group, whom Lee defended unsuccessfully in 1980, when Yeung was sentenced to jail for witness tampering. "Martin Lee is my friend, but I'm very sorry he make statements against China," Yeung says. "It's bad to the Hong Kong people, and not true. Hong Kong will become much better after change hand. This I can guarantee."

Yeung can much better understand a woman who used to work for him, and who perhaps best exemplifies the gangster culture of Hong Kong politics. Her name is Rita Fan. This past January, Fan was chosen by Beijing to head the Provisional Legislature, the undemocratically elected body that is about to replace the Legislative Council, Hong Kong's rough equivalent of our Congress, on which Martin Lee serves. Lee was most recently re-elected to the Legislative Council in 1995 by a popular-vote landslide, but he will have served less than half his four-year term by July 1, when Fan and company move in and push him out.

Fan is 52, a woman with a fixed smile and a drab, cadre-style wardrobe who has spent the last fifteen years in politics—although, she says, she really has no stomach for the profession, because politicians can be so "discourteous." If Tung Chee-hwa is the king of instant-noodle patriots, Fan is assuredly the queen—an only-in-Hong-Kong story of self-reinvention. Like Tung, she was born in Shanghai, and fled with her father, Tse Ta-tung, in 1949, to escape the Communists; her family settled in Hong Kong, with money. Fan says her father was a successful businessman, the agent for a number of European paper mills. She studied science and worked as a student adviser before being asked by the British government in 1983 to sit on the Legislative Council, which was then all-appointed. She remained a legislator for nine years and, for the last three, also served on the cabinet of Lord David Wilson, then the governor of Hong Kong. In that capacity, she strongly endorsed the passage of the Bill of Rights in 1991. For her services to the colonial establishment, Fan was awarded the title of C.B.E.—Commander of the British Empire.

When Chris Patten became governor in 1992, Fan left both the cabinet and the Legislative Council. She says now that she quit because she disagreed with Patten's policy of "open confrontation" with China. Patten has a different recollection. "I chose not to retain her," he says. "She walked out saying she'd never have anything to do with politics again." Less than a year later, Fan had become a political adviser to Beijing and, before long, announced that she'd been "misled" when she supported the Bill of Rights. Fan says now that "I actually was never a pro-Britain figure, even though some people may have seen me that way."

Around the same time that Fan switched political camps, she was hired by Albert Yeung to be Emperor's general manager for administration. Yeung told me that Fan's husband, an accountant, has been a friend of his for more than twenty years, and is today one of Emperor's auditors. Fan says she was aware when she took the job that Yeung had served time in jail, but that "I always hold the view that if someone has done something wrong, and paid his dues, there is no reason to discriminate against him anymore." She worked for Emperor for two years but then quit, she says, because her daughter in Canada was seriously ill. The daughter recovered after Fan donated a kidney; even her critics praise her for that.

She has a lot of critics. For all her years in politics, Fan has never run in a genuine election and, judging from public sentiment in Hong Kong, would not make a very good showing if she did. At her office on a recent afternoon, I asked her whether she had any difficulty with the fact that eight people who will serve under her on the Provisional Legislature had been trounced by popular vote in the 1995 election. She did not. "Winning an election and losing an election is no big deal," she said. "And those who win today may lose tomorrow, and vice versa."

Before leaving, I could not resist asking one more question. Was it true, I inquired, that her late father had fled Shanghai in 1949 not merely because he was a businessman and a capitalist, but a member of the Green Gang, the triad group that had slaughtered Communist Party members by the hundreds? The rumor had been circulating for some time, and, if it were true, I thought it would add a final ironic touch to the story of Rita Fan. At the very least, I expected that the question would get a rise out of her.

She did not bat an eyelash. "In those days, when I was young, the grownups would do their thing, and we kids did not ask too many questions," she said. "So I do not know."

It occurred to me then that her nonchalance was the only logical reaction. In the new spirit of Chinese reunification, when gangsters are patriots, what possible difference did it make? •

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THE HARD QUESTIONS

Eastern exposure

If you took a poll, you'd probably find that not more than one out of every 100 Americans knows that the administration has a plan to expand NATO into Eastern Europe. And hardly any of them give a damn one way or the other. This does not sound like the stuff of which great foreign policy debates are made.

That's the way the administration wants it. And unless the Senate takes a few minutes off from its urgent debates about school prayer, dissing the flag and proper procedures for abortion, that's the way it's likely to be. The most sweeping change in American military policy since the end of the cold war will have taken place without anyone having the foggiest notion of what it will cost, how it will work or where it might lead.

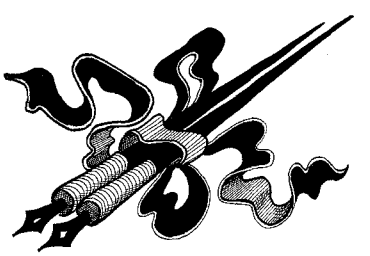
Early in July, Clinton, following through on a pledge he made to East European voters in the Midwest during the 1996 campaign, is scheduled to go to a NATO meeting in Madrid, where he will hug the leaders of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic and welcome them into the alliance. The parliaments of all the member states still have to approve what their leaders have arranged. But this isn't expected to be a problem, since they are mostly rubber-stamp legislatures—except for the U.S. Senate.

Theoretically, the senators could say no—that they like the club just the way it is. Even in America, bigger isn't always better. But the Republican majority isn't much interested in foreign policy issues—except for trying to drum up excitement over China as the new international bogeyman, now that the Soviet Union is no more. And the Democrats, for all their justified complaints about Clinton, fear giving comfort to their even-greater enemies across the aisle.

This is not the way it's supposed to be. The Constitution gives the Senate the *duty*, not the right, to pass judgment on all treaties. The North Atlantic Treaty is up for revisions that will fundamentally change the United States' relationship with Europe, a relationship that has been at the heart of two world wars. This is worth debating. The plan will push NATO up to the borders of the old Soviet Union and treat any attack on the new members as an attack on the United States. Indeed, in terms of its possible consequences, the extension is far more important than the 1991 congressional debate over whether to use an American army to liberate Kuwait.

Then why so little interest? Do we need these nations to help us defend ourselves? No. Do they face any current threat? No. Did the existing members of NATO push us into it? No. Will it be cost-free? No.

The reason for the lack of debate is that hardly anyone in Congress thinks that any danger is involved. The Russians, it is assumed, are too weak to cause any serious trouble. It is also argued (softly) that a U.S.-controlled NATO keeps the Europeans away from one another's throats, not to mention ours. And, not least, the expansion demonstrates that America is the undisputed number one and can do pretty much as it pleases.



But this reasoning leaves a few things out. The Russians are definitely down, but not out. Their parliament still hasn't ratified the SALT-II treaty, and, until it does, thousands of missiles can be targeted at the United States should a less compliant regime take power in Moscow. Is this really a good time to be agitating the Kremlin? Boris Yeltsin, front man for the capitalist commissars who run Russia today, may sign anything that "my friend Bill," as he calls our president, puts in front of him. But, if Russia turns into Weimar, the backlash from nationalists will not be pleasant.

Furthermore, the American public, once focused on NATO's expansion, may begin to ask why it should guarantee the borders of states that were once part of the Soviet empire. It's one thing to go to war for London or Paris or Rome. But, as NATO creeps ever further east (as the planners have in mind), will the voters feel the same about Lublin, Cluj and Debrecen? They also might bristle when the bills arrive for upgrading the East Europeans' antiquated armies. This could cost an estimated $40-120 billion. The administration assures us that the rich West Europeans will cough up the money for their continental brethren, even though those same burghers have been vigorously cutting their own defense budgets.

In fact, none of the European NATO members was ever enthusiastic about expanding the alliance east. They feared, quite reasonably, that this would dilute the American commitment to protect them and involve obligations they considered both unnecessary and undesirable. For a while, they went along simply to placate Washington.

But eventually they realized that there is something in it for them, even though it is not quite what the United States intended. What the East Europeans really want is to get into the exclusive club of the European Union. This would help beef up their economies and stabilize their shaky democracies. But that would cost the European Union a bundle in agricultural and social subsidies. So the door to Brussels stays firmly locked, while the door to NATO opens—a bone, compliments of the United States, that the European Union can throw to the easterners to keep them at bay.

This is why the Brussels gang, once it realized that Washington was really serious about a bigger NATO, decided to make the most of it. Instead of three new members, as the United Sates has proposed, some of the allies want five or more in the first cut. Hey, why not? The Americans are paying.

A bigger NATO thus makes perfect sense for Europeans on all points of the compass. It doesn't cost them, and, should tensions escalate with the Russians, Washington can always call a summit, or threaten a few bombs, just as it did during the cold war. In the meantime, the West Europeans, led by the French and the Germans, will proceed with what they really care about: fortifying the European Union. This may eventually cause a tremor in Washington, where triumphalist U.S. officials still haven't discerned their allies' deeper motives. But, as former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, speaking for many influential Germans, has observed, in the future Bonn will side with Paris more often than with Washington because building a stronger European Union in the post-cold war world is more important than reinforcing the Atlantic alliance.

The Clinton administration, meanwhile, plows blithely ahead. It may even believe its own boilerplate—that it is forging a "new structure of peace"—when all it is doing is igniting the nationalists in Russia, preserving the European Union as a rich man's club, providing luscious new contracts for the arms industry and pledging that Uncle Sam will rescue everyone from Bilbao to Bialystok. With a little luck, the bills will even come due on someone else's watch. That's the way budget "reform" works. Why not foreign policy?

RONALD STEEL

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Apocalypse Now

By coincidence, on the day that Timothy McVeigh was sentenced to death, I saw a documentary called **Waco: The Rules of Engagement** (SomFord). It would be obscene to suggest that this film affords an iota of a fragment of justification for what happened in Oklahoma City, but *Waco* vivifies some matters that might easily drive a canted mind further askew. It shows that, despite immense media coverage, despite several books, many of us remain underinformed about the Waco horror. The word "proof" has a forlorn sound in relation to this story, but as this 165-minute film demonstrates, somber questions still hang in the air about it.

The director of *Waco* was William Gazecki; the executive producers were Dan Gifford and Amy Sommer-Gifford. First-class work by all of them and their colleagues. The editing develops rhythmic and thematic shape without distorting the film's reportorial intent. Interviews and portions of testimony on both sides of the story are handled without "tennis" effect. (One side's shots, then the other's.) But of course we know from the start—before the start—that the film would not have been made if the makers had agreed with the government's findings.

The first raid on the Branch Davidian compound outside Waco, on February 28, 1993, was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and followed months of planning by that agency. Reason: the religious sect had allegedly been stockpiling weapons, some of them illegal. In fact, the Davidians were conducting a legal gun business to support themselves, though—certainly—their faith was apocalyptic, leaning heavily on the Book of Revelation, and they were prepared for an apocalyptic end. That first raid was unsuccessful for the ATF (and their publicity person had summoned the press!). Six Davidians and four agents were killed. Then the FBI was called in. The second raid was on April 19, 1993. (Two years later, to the day, the government building in Oklahoma City was bombed.) That second raid ended in the burning of the compound. Seventy-four Davidians, including twenty-one children under the age of 14, were immolated. Some of the charred corpses had gunshot wounds.

We see: footage of the first attack; of the second attack, the metal pipes of a combat emergency vehicle that poured inflammable tear gas into the compound; footage shot earlier by Davidians of themselves (with a camcorder provided by the FBI), all of them happy. We are given a sketch of the history of the sect and of the troubled life of their leader, David Koresh, who was adored. We see interviews done specifically for this film and also large sections of testimony before the Joint Congressional Committee investigating Waco in 1995. We hear excerpts from phone conversations between Koresh and FBI negotiators in the weeks before the second raid; we hear the 911 call from the compound on February 28 after fire had started and the response of the 911 operator, who was either incredibly slow-witted or lackadaisical. Outstanding for me was some of the congressional testimony; the film's interview with Edward Allard, an expert on FLIR (Forward-Looking Infrared), the aerial photography used in combat that was used on April 19; and the statements of Janet Reno.

At the Washington hearing, the testimony of a young teenage girl who says she was molested by Koresh is truncated by the film editors. (Why? It's relevant that we know about Koresh's sex life, including his many marriages, including some to 14-year-olds. We ought to have the chance to weigh whether his disturbing behavior figured in decisions that led to a mass immolation.) We get pungent replies from two seasoned Texas lawyers who had been retained by the Davidians and who refute government accounts of some matters—and who are questioned aggressively by Representative Charles Schumer (a Democrat, just conceivably interested in defending the Clinton administration). Two FBI officials testify forcefully that no FBI agent fired a shot in the April 19 raid. Then Allard shows us through FLIR footage that, after the Davidian women and children had been put into a concrete storage space to protect them during the FBI assault, flashes that might have been two firing machine-guns were directed into that concrete haven.

Janet Reno appears before the congressional committee and testifies that

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Chronicle of a Disappearance. *Limited engagements. With luck it will come your way. An Absurdist treatment, by a Palestinian, of life for Palestinians in Israel today. Oddly witty, oddly insightful. (Reviewed 6/23/97)* **The Designated Mourner.** *Mike Nichols, as actor, is a perversely strong center in this elegy for a fading civilization. Wallace Shawn's exquisite piece is filmed more or less as it was done in the theater—three people sitting at a table. Haunting. (3/24/97)* **La Promesse.** *Belgium. A 15-year-old city rat is shaken by the virtue of a young African woman amidst the city's foreign workers. Masterly. (5/26/97)* **Ulee's Gold.** *Victor Nunez's latest in his North Florida series. A beekeeper, staunchly played by Peter Fonda, and his quiet fight for integrity, interrupted by a somewhat trite crime story. The quietness is more interesting. (7/7/97)*—**SK**

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she is "very satisfied" with the FBI reports that she has seen. When she is asked why, on the morning of April 19, she didn't cancel a speaking engagement in Baltimore so that she could stay in her office and monitor what was about to happen, she replies that, if she had canceled, it might have created a public impression of a great emergency—though the whole country already thought it was an emergency.

One point about Reno is omitted from the film and from most discussions of the episode that I have read. Reno assumed the office of attorney general on March 12, 1993—after the ATF raid, which had been under the Treasury Department, and before the FBI raid, which was under her command. She had been catapulted from obscurity into an intense national spotlight, into the middle of a ghastly confrontation—a newcomer surrounded by experienced officials who already had certain views on the Davidian matter. Certainly the FBI was attempting to settle the difficulty by negotiations; almost equally certainly, the April attack on the compound might have been delayed or altered by a more experienced attorney general. It's said that Reno agreed to go ahead with the attack because of the reports of child abuse. Later that week the Department of Justice itself stated that it had no evidence of child abuse during the fifty-one-day siege.

In my view, the basis of the government's actions against the Davidians is best understood historically. Indispensable here is Richard Hofstadter's book *Anti-intellectualism in American Life.* In a chapter called "The Evangelical Spirit" Hofstadter says: "The American mind was shaped in the mold of early modern Protestantism ... the subordination of men of ideas to men of emotional power or manipulative skill." Examples abound before the Davidians, and since then we have seen Heaven's Gate. What Hofstadter calls "revivalist or enthusiastic movements" have been a continuing worry to American propriety, to rationalism. Fundamentally, far beneath the Waco arguments and testimony, that old and deep conflict is the root of the horror.

In the film world, *Waco* joins the honorably long list of American documentaries that examine governmental actions—the De Antonio-Talbot *Point of Order,* about Joe McCarthy; Eugene S. Jones's *A Face of War,* about Vietnam; and many more. Of course, one can treat those films merely as consolations because people were free to make them in this country. But it's possibly not too delusory to think that they contribute to the vitalizing of American conscience.

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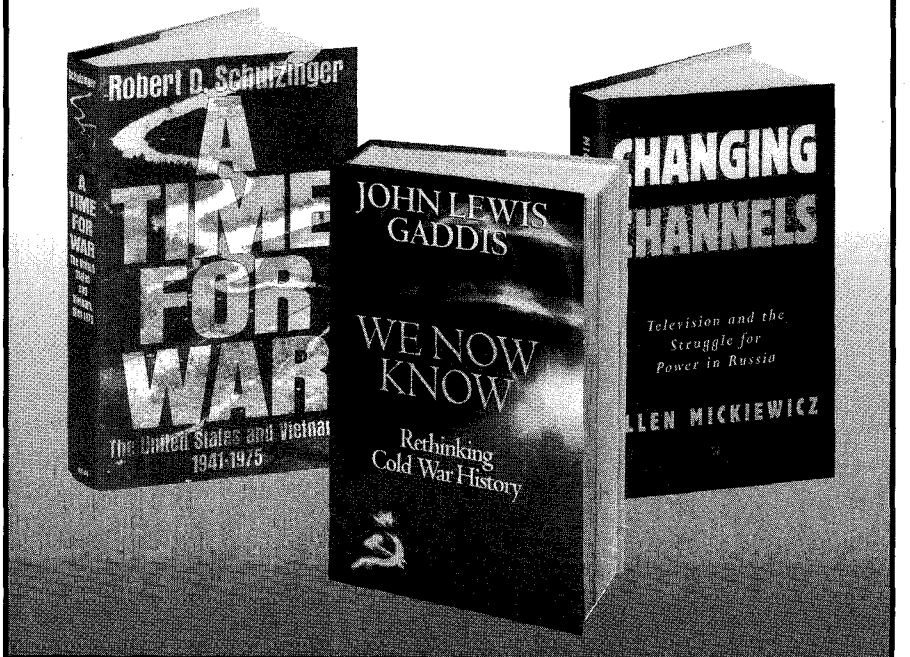

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Note. Waco is part of the Human Rights Watch Film Festival now touring around, but it has also been given separate release. Already shown in a number of cities, it will appear in several more around the country. •

Jed Perl on Art

Earth

If you want to see the bedrock of contemporary painting, you might begin by looking at the work that landscape painters do. Although the strongest recent painting is by no means all landscape, landscape painters grapple with an essential paradox of the creative act, because they make something of their own out of a world that they have not made. Their raw materials are the surroundings that everybody knows, but what the painter needs to know is how to find nature's internal structures, and then to anatomize them and to recreate them on the canvas. In a fascinating study published in 1947, Max J. Friedländer wrote that a landscape "rises up before us like something mysterious, a melody rather than a statement." Making sense of that ineffable spirit may pose an especially interesting challenge for the current generation of painters, who took the back-to-nature ethos of the late 1960s as a starting point. Certainly landscape is the only kind of painting that enables artists to explore museum-art conventions even as they're slipping Thoreau and Gary Snyder into their knapsacks and following the nineteenth-century Japanese poet-painters to the hills. The afterglow of that toss-off-the-cares-of-the-city attitude can still be felt in the consistently impressive showings that landscape painting makes in New York galleries, year after year.

The best new landscape painting that I saw this season was the six-foot-wide view of upstate New York farmland that was the centerpiece of Temma Bell's exhibition at the Bowery Gallery. I imagine that Bell means to suggest a storyteller's power with the name of her big painting, *Over the Garden and Through to the Rams*. Her ear may have failed her in that rather jejune title, but the hand of a master is evident in the unfurling rhythms of her brush. She seems to pull her subject straight out of the day-to-day life that she's living far from the metropolis. The garden enclosure in the foreground, with its dogs and its poultry and its fence twined with grape vines, is like the scene-setting opening description in a novel. And from there, moving past a beautifully rendered treetop to a golden-green field and deep blue hills, she holds us through the casual assurance of her dashes and scratches and scumbles of paint, her delicate, almost translucent greens and browns. What sets this painting apart from Bell's smaller-sized landscapes is the complexity that she is able to encompass here, and the avidity for experience that such complexity implies. By the time my eyes reach the top of the canvas, a whole world has been revealed.

Bell combines pinpoint accuracy with heedless ease to give the American northeast a funny sweetness, a once-upon-a-time magic. She is one of those rare landscape painters who thinks both literally and lyrically, so much so that the two impulses become echoes of one another. The smallest naturalistic incident conveys a shuddering emotional intensity, while the most sweeping movement feels taut and particular. This marvelous dynamic has its origins in the early fifteenth century, when the Limbourg brothers painted a cycle of miniatures depicting the occupations of the months for the Duc de Berry. It is there in Brueghel's encyclopedic panoramas of Flemish life, in Rubens's wide-angle views full of exactly rendered details, in Marquet's pellucid harbor scenes, and in Balthus's pastoral reveries, with their grayed-over light and gently rolling terrain. Bell may not be on a par with all these artists, but when I look at her painting I feel that their concerns are alive. No landscape this complex yet easygoing has been exhibited in a New York gallery in many, many years.

The taking-it-all-in spirit of Bell's big new painting is more than a matter of what the eye can see. Bell, who is 51, has over the years been written about in most of the major art magazines; this April marked her sixteenth one-woman show. Yet she is nowhere near as well-known as she ought to be, and it's possible to feel that she's defying the underground character of her reputation through the broadness of her gaze. In doing so, she suggests the general situation of landscape painters today. They see the natural world in terms of complicated interactions between nature and culture—and, meanwhile, the curators and the dealers and the collectors who put the big money on contemporary art assume that landscape begat earthworks, after which Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* sank beneath the surface of the Great Salt Lake and landscape became an emblem, an icon, a special case.

There is always somebody who wants to paint the landscape to end all landscapes. In the nineteenth century it was Frederic Edwin Church, the American maestro of gaudy sunrises in exotic locales, who wowed them at the salons. In the 1980s, it was Anselm Kiefer, whose scorched-earth images, those gray-on-gray hymns to diminishing possibilities, were by some perverse logic of the times celebrated as a resurrection of possibilities. Church and Kiefer (the British painter John Martin also comes to mind) favor an apocalyptic mood that generally involves their treating a large surface in a pointedly singular way. That may have a certain potency as a statement, but it is a statement that denies the very idea of difference-within-wholeness that is the essence of landscape painting.

Max J. Friedländer wrote that "land is the 'thing-in-itself,' landscape the 'phenomenon.' " To respond to such multivarious phenomena, a painter must be open-minded yet assured. Temma Bell threads through all the variety with an easy-flowing, quicksilver virtuosity. Stuart Shils, a Philadelphia artist who had his first New York one-man show at Tibor de Nagy in January, suggests more abrasive reactions through his dramatically broken brushwork. Lennart Anderson, a generation older than Bell and Shils, had a landscape retrospective at the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries in January, and demonstrated an amazingly poetic conversational tone in his luxuriantly green views of America, Italy, and Greece. Anderson uses a combination of strictly constructed volumes and near-abstract surface design to make us feel as if we're right there with him as he muses on the scene. When Anderson passes lightly over certain details, it is a kind of discretion. And when he turns from a passage of summary description to a more naturalistically structured passage, I feel his candor, his desire to be absolutely clear.

These one-person shows obviously represent only a small fraction of the work being done, and certain galleries, aware that much more is going on, mounted useful group exhibitions during the season. There was "Landscape as Abstraction" at Graham and "Landscape" at the Painting Center and "Cityscape" at Marl-

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borough. Of the new paintings that I saw in the landscape group shows this season, among the most convincing were several by Carl Plansky at the Painting Center. Plansky carries his impressions of trees and branches into such overall swirling effects that it's not especially easy to know what you're seeing. The landscape becomes a painterly effusion. Yet the choppiness of the strokes conveys a brash immediacy, a Zen-like thunderbolt of revelation. Plansky's canvases capture some of the roistering thrill of days when it's so sunny or windy or rainy that the weather feels hyperbolic.

The romantics were the first artists to regard the natural world as a reflection of their moods. And once Friedrich and Turner had painted landscapes that could only be described in terms of emotional states—as, say, exalted or depressed—the matter-of-factness of nature began to give way to the otherworldliness of abstraction. Joan Mitchell, who died five years ago, is a touchstone for many mid-career painters, Plansky among them, because she built a whole career at the point where landscape became abstraction. There is something opulently inscrutable about Mitchell's work, since so many of her shimmering naturalistic effects appear to be pulled straight out of an intently nonobjective approach. What Mitchell takes from nature is the idea that there are no strict boundaries, no absolutely definite forms, and it sometimes seems that this view of nature has become such an article of faith in New York that an artist such as Temma Bell, who does not care to equivocate, can be regarded as naïve. Although Bell is a modernist in her offhand paint handling and brilliantly concise renderings, her telegraphic way of creating an illusion does not lead her to question the legitimacy of that illusion.

As far as quality is concerned, of course, the decisive factor is not where an artist ends up on the nature-into-abstraction continuum, so much as the character of the small, discrete decisions that build the image. What ultimately matters is how the painting makes us feel, and the feeling has everything to do with how the paint is laid on and the parts are brought together. Some revealing, almost technical observations on the way an artist constructs a landscape can be found in a brilliant essay, "Abstract Expressionism and Landscape," written in the early '60s by Fairfield Porter, who was as gifted a critic as he was a painter. Porter liked the rapid-fire evocation of landscape mood and light in his friend de Kooning's abstractions, but he was always also attracted to particularity and

ART SCENES *Galleries, Exhibits, and Events*

Salander-O'Reilly Galleries 20 East 79th Street, NYC, 10021, 212-879-6606. Monday through Friday, 9:30-5:30. *Anne Peretz: Paintings*. Twenty new landscape paintings, including large triptychs, in oil on canvas, June 17 - August 1. *John Griefen: Paintings*. Six new works. Large abstract paintings in acrylic on canvas. June 17 - August 1. Note: Salander O'Reilly Galleries will be closed the week of June 28 to July 5.

Antique Navajo and Mexican Textiles Andrew Nagen Gallery. P.O. Box 1306, Corrales, NM 87048, 505-898-5058. By appointment, please. Since 1976 we have specialized in the sale, purchase and appraisal of classic, transitional and regional textiles from all the Southwestern Native American and Hispanic cultures. We supply or request photos for purchase, sale or approval. No catalog.

Beacon Hill Fine Art 980 Madison Avenue, NYC, 10021, 212-734-3636, Monday through Friday 10-6. *Bernhard Gutmann: Face to Face*. The exhibition reintroduces this American Impressionist whose wide-ranging mastery includes oils, pastels, watercolor and graphics. Gutmann's work is exhilarating in its range of scale, medium and subject; including figurative themes, intimate interiors, panoramic landscapes, slices of life, urban views and still-life. Full color catalog is available. Through July 11.

Center for Creative Photography The University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, 520-621-7968. Monday through Friday, 11-5; Sunday, 12-5. *An Excess of Fact: Lee Friedlander—The Sonoran Desert* offers a full examination of Friedlander's most recent and most ambitious photographic project. After fifteen years of photographing the Sonoran Desert, this renowned interpreter of the American scene has distilled a selection of 93 images made since 1991. Through July 6. *Sandra Semchuk: how far back is home....* This exhibition surveys over two decades of this Canadian artist's work, exploring her recurrent themes of ethnic, nationalistic, and gender identity through poignant explorations of self, family and community. July 13 through September 14.

Swann Galleries 104 East 25th Street, NYC, 212-254-4710. Monday through Friday, 10-6; previews Saturdays prior to auctions, 10-4. AUCTION: August 6: *Posters, featuring American Railway Express from the 1920s*. Please write or call for preview hours, quarterly newsletter with full auction schedule, and to purchase catalogs. Now accepting consignments for late autumn and winter auctions.

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an exacting kind of reportage. In a sense, this essay is Porter's version of the age-old dynamic interaction between literalism and lyricism, only instead of beginning with the Renaissance, he begins with Abstract Expressionism. Porter recalls de Kooning remarking "that European abstractions derive from still life, while his referred to landscape." De Kooning, Porter tells us, had an idea about "the difference between European and American painting in general, that even European landscape has an objective center, as if the landscape were a still life, of, say, a mountain, while American painting does not have this sort of center, this division into 'subject' and 'background.' "

Porter, who was fond of a certain kind of wordplay, is leading his readers to the idea that there is something nonobjective—i.e., not having objects—about American landscape. This is a sweeping generalization, but it's a useful one. Alex Katz's landscapes, Porter explains, are nonobjective. Porter says that Katz "once said that in nature he preferred a field." And then Porter adds, parenthetically, that "a field is not an object." It occurs to me that Temma Bell paints lots of fields, but that she fills them with animals, which is a way of giving an objectivity to the nonobjectivity, a way of introducing a subject that turns the field into a background. As for what Porter does in his own landscapes, he is sometimes more objective and sometimes more nonobjective, and often he seems to seek a rapprochement between the two. Porter was the subject of a small retrospective in May at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. In one of the largest paintings, *Dog at the Door* (1970), he renders the side of a house in Maine with the greatest fidelity, but then knits it into a pattern of grass, water, boats, distant shore and sky, until the view becomes nonobjective, which Porter defines as a landscape that is "a continuum of relationships."

Porter had fifteen one-man shows at Tibor de Nagy between 1952 and 1970, and he is now being presented by this gallery as a sort of father figure for a contemporary realism that the gallery strongly supports. This is an admirable effort to shore up an embattled contemporary tradition, but I sometimes fear that Porter's paradoxes are being turned into another generation's pieties. I don't know if Stuart Shils, the 43-year-old painter from Philadelphia who exhibited at Tibor de Nagy four months before the Porter retrospective, is familiar with Porter's essay on landscape, but there are certainly lots of fields in Shils's paintings, and sure enough they give the paintings a nonobjective look. That's perfectly all right, except that Shils doesn't know where the nonobjective landscape ends and the objective landscape begins. He is attracted to fields because they're as flat as the canvas, but he also wants to use the volume of the paint to suggest a lush, light-filled atmosphere, and so the result is all too often an atmosphere in a void.

Working in oil on paper mounted on board, Shils practices a sort of expressionism-in-miniature that makes us acutely aware of the way that the painting is put together. He has a feeling for sensuous verisimilitude, and in a few compositions in which all we see is the green of foliage and the gray-blue of the sky, his riled-up surfaces make convincing poetic flashes. These paintings, generally only a foot high, are a little like haiku; and, just as the word in a haiku is scaled big in relation to the poem, so in Shils's paintings the brushwork is scaled big in relation to the landscape. The side of a building or a tree or a hill is suggested with one pass of the brush. It's the brisk agitation of the surfaces that gives these views of fields and stands of trees and broad skies and city streets and red brick houses their appeal. But things are locked up too quickly. Shils reinforces an overall look by reining in the complexities. He pushes all the information into clipped, repetitive, rectilinear compositions. What he has going for him is a charmer's way with a painterly surface, but the surfaces don't get your imagination going. Judged as nature poetry, they're vague. Judged as painterly abstraction, they're formulaic.

Shils's show stirred up a fair amount of interest among people who care about landscape painting. In part that was because the Tibor de Nagy Gallery was giving the kind of major presentation to a younger painter that is now rare in New York. Yet going through a room full of these small paintings, all basically the same size, I began to suspect that most of the artist's critical decisions had been made before he ever put paint to paper. While this is no way to do a landscape, the elegantly levelheaded consistency that results may be mighty appealing to an audience that is tired of overhyped art and will settle for something that looks sort of like a Porter or a Morandi or a Ryder.

And if Temma Bell fails to find a following among the same audience, it could be because she has gone her own way and cared not one whit what Fairfield Porter or anybody else thinks that a landscape ought to look like in the wake of Abstract Expressionism. Such a skepticism about Abstract Expressionism also has a long history in New York; and, although Bell is without doubt an original, her particular brand of independence does owe something to the impact of her parents, Leland Bell and Louisa Matthiasdottir, two of the most independent-minded painters of the previous generation. In a painting by Bell or Matthiasdottir, a realist's experience is organized in a constructivist's terms.

The Lucky Ones

One by one the leaves go limp and scatter
On the trout pond, just a few of them

Escaping down the mossy sluice that separates
Whatever has been built here from the forest

With its scrim of tall, dilapidated birch.
Unsuffered, all the years of letting go,

The houses and the children or the words
Of longing and regret that what we spoke,

A language almost foreign, never could
Accommodate. But as they skim across

The river to the open shore, whatever sings
Most loudly in the rushes—everything

Unsaid, untouched, or even undesired
In the life they gathered up before—

Is what the body will remember most
Tenaciously, what takes its place before

We're swindled free of everything we think
Of as ourselves, a leaf's arterial display.

The fish, mouths open, larger now,
All drive their sleek, long bodies

At the dark spot floating on the surface,
Thundering at once before they whip

Themselves into reverse. And even you,
One of the lucky ones, know only where

You've come from, nothing of the sunlit
Undecipherable air beyond the line.

JAMES LONGENBACH

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And those principles have an afterlife in Temma Bell's work, if only as an instinctive recoil from the toss-of-the-dice chanciness that an immersion in painterly landscape can, for better or for worse, imply.

Temma Bell does not see instability and confusion as part of the modern experience, but her rejection is personal and idiosyncratic, and it has nothing to do with the imperious chill of a reactionary gesture. She keeps so close to the immediacy of the act of painting that we experience things right along with her. Her dogs, her poultry, her vine-covered fence and her arching tree seem casually described, but they have a weight, a force. Bell's exhibition this spring, like most of her others, included cozy interior scenes, with children reading books and cats sitting on tables heaped with pumpkins and squash. The variety of her interests and the lightness of her touch could have led some people to miss the incisiveness of her thought. In the landscapes, certainly, the slightest shift in tone or touch conveys a topographical sensitivity that bears comparison to Ruisdael and Courbet. Bell gives a contemporary exuberance to an older kind of objectivity. She reclaims the story-telling richness of landscape for our generation. This is a major achievement. •

What Lee Kuan Yew and Li Peng don't understand about Asia.

Human Rights and Asian Values

By Amartya Sen

I.

In 1776, just when the Declaration of Independence was being adopted in this country, Thomas Paine complained, in *Common Sense*, that Asia had "long expelled" freedom. In this lament, Paine saw Asia in company with much of the rest of the world (America, he hoped, would be different): "Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her as a stranger and England hath given her warning to depart." For Paine, political freedom and democracy were valuable anywhere, though they were being violated nearly everywhere.

The violation of freedom and democracy in different parts of the world continues today, if not as comprehensively as in Paine's time. There is a difference, though. A new class of arguments have emerged that deny the universal importance of these freedoms. The most prominent of these contentions is the claim that Asian values do not regard freedom to be important in the way that it is regarded in the West. Given this difference in value systems—the argument runs—Asia must be faithful to its own system of philosophical and political priorities.

Cultural differences and value differences between Asia and the West were stressed by several official delegations at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993. The foreign minister of Singapore warned that "universal recognition of the ideal of human rights can be harmful if universalism is used to deny or mask the reality of diversity." The Chinese delegation played a leading role in emphasizing the regional differences, and in making sure that the prescriptive framework adopted in the declarations made room for regional diversity. The Chinese foreign minister even put on record the proposition, apparently applicable in China and elsewhere, that "Individuals must put the states' rights before their own."

I want to examine the thesis that Asian values are less supportive of freedom and more concerned with order and discipline, and that the claims of human rights in the areas of political and civil liberties, therefore, are less relevant and less appropriate in Asia than in the West. The defense of authoritarianism in Asia on the grounds of the special nature of Asian values calls for historical scrutiny, to which I shall presently turn. But there is also a different justification of authoritarian governance in Asia that has received attention recently. It argues for authoritarian governance in the interest of economic development. Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore and a great champion of the idea of "Asian values," has defended authoritarian arrangements on the ground of their alleged effectiveness in promoting economic success.

Does authoritarianism really work so well? It is certainly true that some relatively authoritarian states (such as South Korea, Lee's Singapore, and post-reform China) have had faster rates of economic growth than many less authoritarian ones (such as India, Costa Rica or Jamaica). But the "Lee hypothesis" is based on very selective and limited information, rather than on any general statistical testing over the wide-ranging data that are available. We cannot really take the high economic growth of China or South Korea in Asia as "proof positive" that authoritarianism does better in promoting economic growth—any more than we can draw the opposite conclusion on the basis of the fact that Botswana, the fastest-growing African country (and one of the fastest growing countries in the world), has been a oasis of democracy in that unhappy continent. Much depends on the precise circumstances.

There is little general evidence, in fact, that authoritarian governance and the suppression of political and civil rights are really beneficial in encouraging economic development. The statistical picture is much more complicated. Systematic empirical studies give no real support to the claim that there is a general conflict between political rights and economic performances. The directional linkage seems to depend on many other circumstances, and while some statistical investigations note a weakly negative relation, others find a strongly positive one. On balance, the hypothesis that there is no relation between freedom and prosperity in either direction is hard to reject. Since political liberty has a significance of its own, the case for it remains untarnished.

There is also a more basic issue of research methodology. We must not only look at statistical connections, we must examine also the causal processes that are involved in economic growth

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and development. The economic policies and circumstances that led to the success of east Asian economies are by now reasonably well understood. While different empirical studies have varied in emphasis, there is by now a fairly agreed-upon list of "helpful policies," and they include openness to competition, the use of international markets, a high level of literacy and education, successful land reforms, and public provision of incentives for investment, exporting, and industrialization. There is nothing whatsoever to indicate that any of these policies is inconsistent with greater democracy, that any one of them had to be sustained by the elements of authoritarianism that happened to be present in South Korea or Singapore or China. The recent Indian experience also shows that what is needed for generating faster economic growth is a friendlier economic climate rather than a harsher political system.

It is also important, in this context, to look at the connection between political and civil rights, on the one hand, and the prevention of major disasters, on the other. Political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw attention forcefully to general needs and to demand appropriate public action. The governmental response to acute suffering often depends on the pressure that is put on it, and this is where the exercise of political rights (voting, criticizing, protesting, and so on) can make a real difference. I have discussed (in these pages and in my book *Resources, Values, and Development*) the remarkable fact that, in the terrible history of famines in the world, no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press. Whether we look at famines in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, or other dictatorial regimes, or in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, or in China from 1958 to 1961 (at the failure of the Great Leap Forward, when between 23 and 30 million people died), or currently in North Korea, we do not find exceptions to this rule. (It is true that Ireland was part of democratic Britain during its famine of the 1840s, but the extent of London's political dominance over the Irish was so strong—and the social distance so great and so old, as illustrated by Spenser's severely unfriendly description of the Irish in the sixteenth century—that the English rule over Ireland was, for all practical purposes, a colonial rule.)

While this connection is clearest in the case of famine prevention, the positive role of political and civil rights applies to the prevention of economic and social disasters generally. When things go fine and everything is routinely good, this consequence of democracy may not be sorely missed. But it comes into its own when things get fouled up, for one reason or another. Then the political incentives provided by democratic governance acquire great practical value. To concentrate only on economic incentives (which the market system provides) while ignoring political incentives (which democratic systems provide) is to opt for a deeply unbalanced set of ground rules.

II.

I turn now to the nature and the relevance of Asian values. This is not an easy exercise, for various reasons. The size of Asia is itself a problem. Asia is where about 60 percent of the world's population lives. What can we take to be the values of so vast a region, with so much diversity? It is important to state at the outset that there are no quintessential values that separate the Asians as a group from people in the rest of the world and which fit all parts of this immensely large and heterogeneous population. The temptation to see Asia as a single unit reveals a distinctly Eurocentric perspective. Indeed, the term "the Orient," which was widely used for a long time to mean essentially what Asia means today, referred to the positional vision of Europe, as it contemplated the direction of the rising sun.

In practice, the advocates of "Asian values" have tended to look primarily at east Asia as the region of their particular applicability. The generalization about the contrast between the West and Asia often concentrates on the land to the east of Thailand, though there is an even more ambitious claim that the rest of Asia is rather "similar." Lee Kuan Yew outlines "the fundamental difference between Western concepts of society and government and East Asian concepts" by explaining that "when I say East Asians, I mean Korea, Japan, China, Vietnam, as distinct from Southeast Asia, which is a mix between the Sinic and the Indian, though Indian culture itself emphasizes similar values."

In fact, even east Asia itself has much diversity, and there are many variations to be found between Japan and China and Korea and other parts of east Asia. Various cultural influences from inside and outside this region have affected human lives over the history of this large territory. These influences still survive in a variety of ways. Thus, my copy of Houghton Mifflin's *Almanac* describes the religion of the 124 million Japanese in the following way: 112 million Shintoist, 93 million Buddhist. Cultures and traditions overlap in regions such as east Asia and even within countries such as Japan or China or Korea, and attempts at generalization about "Asian values" (with forceful and often brutal implications for masses of people in this region with diverse faiths, convictions, and commitments) cannot but be extremely crude. Even the 2.8 million people of Singapore have vast variations of cultural and historical traditions, despite the fact that the conformism that characterizes its political leadership and the official interpretation of Asian values is very powerful at this time.

Still, the recognition of heterogeneity in the traditions of Asia does not settle the issue of the presence or the absence of a commitment to individual freedom and political liberty in Asian culture. The traditions extant in Asia differ among themselves, but they may share some common characteristics. It has been asserted, for example, that the treatment of elderly members of the family (say, aged parents) is more supportive in Asian countries than in the West. It is possible to argue about this claim, but there would be nothing very peculiar if some similarities of this kind or other kinds were to obtain across the diverse cultures of Asia. Diversities need not apply to every field. The question that has to be asked, rather, is whether Asian countries share the common feature of being skeptical of freedom and liberty, while emphasizing order and discipline. The advocates of Asian particularism allow internal heterogeneity within Asia, but in the context of a shared mistrust of the claims of political liberalism.

Authoritarian lines of reasoning often receive indirect backing from certain strains of thought in the West itself. There is clearly a tendency in America and Europe to assume, if only implicitly, the primacy of political freedom and democracy as a fundamental and ancient feature of Western culture—one not to be easily found in Asia. There is a contrast, it is alleged, between the authoritarianism implicit in, say, Confucianism and the respect for liberty and autonomy allegedly deeply rooted in Western liberal culture. Western promoters of personal and political freedom in the non-Western world often see such an analysis as a necessary preliminary to bringing Western values to Asia and Africa.

In all this, there is a substantial tendency to extrapolate backwards from the present. Values that the European enlightenment and other relatively recent developments have made widespread cannot really be seen as part of the Western heritage as it was experienced over

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millennia. In answer to the question, "at what date, in what circumstances, the notion of individual liberty ... first became explicit in the West," Isaiah Berlin has noted: "I have found no convincing evidence of any clear formulation of it in the ancient world." This view has been disputed by Orlando Patterson, among others. He points to particular features in Western culture, particularly in Greece and Rome, and in the tradition of Christianity, which indicate the presence of selective championing of individual liberty.

The question that does not get adequately answered—it is scarcely even asked—is whether similar elements are absent in other cultures. Berlin's thesis concerns the notion of individual freedom as we now understand it, and the absence of "any clear formulation" of this can certainly co-exist with the advocacy of selected *components* of the comprehensive notion that makes up the contemporary idea of individual liberty. Such components are found in the Greco-Roman world and in the world of Jewish and Christian thought. But such an acknowledgment has to be followed up by examining whether these components are absent elsewhere—that is, in non-Western cultures. We have to search for the parts rather than the whole, in the West and in Asia and elsewhere.

To illustrate this point, consider the idea that personal freedom for all is important for a good society. This claim can be seen as being composed of two distinct elements: (1) the value of personal freedom: that personal freedom is important and should be guaranteed for those who "matter" in a good society; and (2) the equality of freedom: that everyone matters, and personal freedom should be guaranteed, on a shared basis, for all. Aristotle wrote much in support of the former proposition, but in his exclusion of women and slaves he did little to defend the latter. Indeed, the championing of equality in this form is of quite recent origin. Even in a society stratified according to class and caste, freedom could be valued for the privileged—such as the Mandarins and the Brahmins—in much the same way that freedom was valued for non-slave men in corresponding Greek conceptions of a good society.

Or consider another useful distinction, between (1) the value of toleration: that there must be toleration of diverse beliefs, commitments and actions of different people; and (2) the equality of tolerance: that the toleration that is offered to some must be reasonably offered to all (except when toler-

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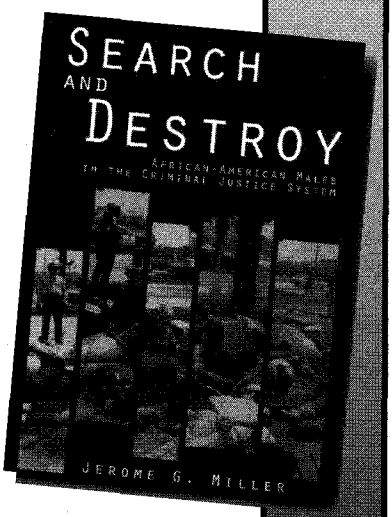

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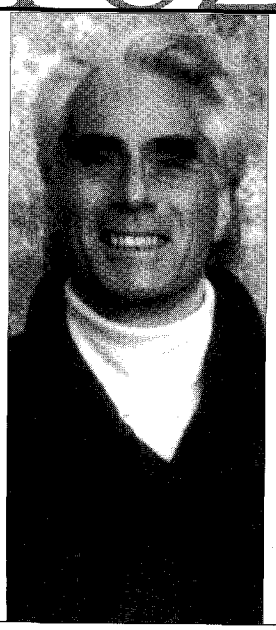

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ance of some will lead to intolerance for others). Again, arguments for some tolerance can be seen plentifully in earlier Western writings, without being supplemented by arguments for universal tolerance. The roots of modern democratic and liberal ideas can be sought in terms of constitutive elements, rather than as a whole.

In the terms of such an analysis, the question has to be asked whether these constitutive components can be found in Asian writings in the way they can be found in Western thought. The presence of these components must not be confused with the absence of the opposite, that is, with the presence of ideas and doctrines that clearly *do not* emphasize freedom and tolerance. The championing of order and discipline can be found in Western classics as well. Indeed, it is by no means clear to me that Confucius is more authoritarian than, say, Plato or Augustine. The real issue is not whether these non-freedom perspectives are present in Asian traditions, but whether the freedom-oriented perspectives are absent from them.

This is where the diversity of Asian value systems becomes quite central. An obvious example is the role of Buddhism as a form of thought. In Buddhist tradition, great importance is attached to freedom, and the traditions of earlier Indian thinking to which Buddhist thoughts relate allow much room for volition and free choice. Nobility of conduct has to be achieved in freedom, and even the ideas of liberation (such as *moksha*) include this feature. The presence of these elements in Buddhist thought does not obliterate the importance of the discipline emphasized by Confucianism, but it would be a mistake to take Confucianism to be the only tradition in Asia—or in China. Since so much of the contemporary authoritarian interpretation of Asian values concentrates on Confucianism, this diversity is particularly worth emphasizing.

Indeed, the reading of Confucianism that is now standard among authoritarian champions of Asian values does less than justice to Confucius's own teachings, to which Simon Leys has recently drawn attention. Confucius did not recommend blind allegiance to the state. When Zilu asks him "how to serve a prince," Confucius replies: "Tell him the truth even if it offends him." The censors in Singapore or Beijing would take a very different view. Confucius is not averse to practical caution and tact, but he does not forgo the recommendation to oppose a bad government. "When the [good] way prevails in the state, speak boldly and act boldly. When the state has lost the way, act boldly and speak softly."

Indeed, Confucius clearly points to the fact that the two pillars of the imagined edifice of Asian values, loyalty to family and obedience to the state, can be severely in conflict with each other. The Governor of She told Confucius, "Among my people, there is a man of unbending integrity: when his father stole a sheep, he denounced him." To this, Confucius replied: "Among my people, men of integrity do things differently: a father covers up for his son, a son covers up for his father—and there is integrity in what they do."

Elias Canetti observed that, in understanding the teachings of Confucius, we have to examine not only what he says, but what he does not say. The subtlety involved in what is often called "the silence of Confucius" seems to have escaped his austere modern interpreters, who tend to assume that what is not explicitly supported must be implicitly forbidden. It is not my contention that Confucius was a democrat, or a great champion of freedom and dissent. Yet there is certainly good reason to question the monolithic image of an authoritarian Confucius that is championed by the contemporary advocates of Asian values.

III.

If we turn our attention from China to the Indian subcontinent, we are in no danger of running into a hard-to-interpret silence. It is difficult to out-do the Indian traditions in arguing endlessly and elaborately. India not only has the largest religious literature in the world, it also has the largest volume of atheistic and materialistic writings among the ancient civilizations. The Indian epic *Mahabharata*, which is often compared to the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*, is in fact seven times as long as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* put together. In a well-known Bengali poem written in the nineteenth century by the religious and social leader Ram Mohan Ray, the horror of death is described thus: "Just imagine how terrible it will be on the day you die, / Others will go on speaking, but you will not be able to respond."

This fondness for disputation, for discussing things at leisure and at length, is itself somewhat in tension with the order and discipline championed in allegedly Asian values. But the content of what has been written also displays a variety of views on freedom, tolerance, and equality. In many ways, the most interesting articulation of the need for tolerance on an egalitarian basis can be found in the writings of the emperor Ashoka in the third century B.C. Ashoka commanded a larger Indian empire than any other Indian king (including the Moghuls, and even the Raj, if we omit the native states that the British let be). He turned his attention to public ethics and enlightened politics after being horrified by the carnage that he witnessed in his own victorious battle against the king of Kalinga, in what is now Orissa.

The emperor converted to Buddhism. He helped to make it a world religion by sending emissaries abroad with the Buddhist message to East and West, and he covered the country with stone inscriptions describing forms of good life and the nature of good government. The inscriptions give a special importance to tolerance of diversity. The edict (now numbered XII) at Erragudi, for example, puts the issue thus:

> ... a man must not do reverence to his own sect or disparage that of another man without reason. Depreciation should be for specific reason only, because the sects of other people all deserve reverence for one reason or another.
>
> By thus acting, a man exalts his own sect, and at the same time does service to the sects of other people. By acting contrariwise, a man hurts his own sect, and does disservice to the sects of other people. For he who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own sect, in reality by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own sect.

The importance of tolerance is emphasized in these edicts from the third century B.C.—their importance as public policy by the government and as advice for the behavior of citizens toward each other.

About the domain and the jurisdiction of tolerance, Ashoka was a universalist. He demanded this for all, including those whom he described as "forest people," the tribal population living in pre-agricultural economic formations. Condemning his own conduct before his conversion, Ashoka notes that in the war in Kalinga "men and animals numbering one hundred and fifty thousands were carried away [captive] from that [defeated] kingdom." He goes on to state that the slaughter or the taking of prisoners "of even a hundredth or thousandth part of all those people who were slain or died or were carried away [captive] at that time in Kalinga is now considered very deplorable" by him. Indeed, he proceeds to assert that now he believes that "even if [a person] should wrong him, that [offense] would be forgiven if it is possible to forgive it." The

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object of his government is described as "non-injury, restraint, impartiality, and mild behavior" applied "to all creatures."

Ashoka's championing of egalitarianism and universal tolerance may appear un-Asian to some commentators, but his views are firmly rooted in lines of analysis already in vogue in intellectual Buddhist circles in India in the preceding centuries. In this context, however, it is interesting to look at another author whose treatise on governance and political economy was also profoundly influential. I refer to Kautilya, the author of *Arthashastra*, which can be translated as "economic science," though it is at least as much concerned with practical politics as with economics. Kautilya was a contemporary of Aristotle. He lived in the fourth century B.C., and worked as a senior minister of emperor Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka's grandfather, who had established the large Maurya empire across the subcontinent.

Kautilya's writings are often cited as proof that freedom and tolerance were not valued in the Indian classical tradition. There are two aspects of the impressively detailed account of economics and politics to be found in *Arthashastra* that tend to suggest the view that there is no support here for a liberal democracy. First, Kautilya is a consequentialist of quite a narrow kind. While the objectives of promoting the happiness of the subjects and the order in the kingdom are strongly backed up by detailed policy advice, the king is seen as a benevolent autocrat, whose power, albeit to do good, is to be maximized through proper organization. Thus, *Arthashastra* presents ideas and suggestions on such practical subjects as famine prevention and administrative effectiveness that remain relevant even today—more than 2,000 years later—and at the same time it advises the king about how to get his way, if necessary through the violation of the freedom of his adversaries.

Second, Kautilya seems to attach little importance to political or economic equality, and his vision of the good society is strongly stratified according to lines of class and caste. Even though his objective of promoting happiness applies to all, his other objectives clearly have an inegalitarian form and content. There is an obligation to provide the less fortunate members of the society the support that they need for escaping misery and enjoying life—Kautilya specifically identifies as the duty of the king to "provide the orphans, the aged, the infirm, the afflicted, and the helpless with maintenance," along with providing "subsistence to helpless women when they are carrying and also to the [newborn] children they give birth to"; but this obligation is very far from valuing the freedom of these people to decide how they wish to live. The tolerance of heterodoxy is not to be found here. Indeed, there is very little tolerance in Kautilya, except tolerance for the upper sections of the community.

What, then, do we conclude from this? Certainly Kautilya is no democrat, no egalitarian, no general promoter of everyone's freedom. And yet, when it comes to the characterization of what the most favored people—the upper classes—should get, freedom figures quite prominently. The denial of personal liberty of the upper classes (the so-called "Arya") is seen as unacceptable. Indeed, regular penalties, some of them heavy, are specified for the taking of such adults or children in indenture—even though the slavery of the existing slaves is seen as perfectly acceptable. To be sure, we do not find in Kautilya anything like Aristotle's clear articulation of the importance of free exercise of capability. But the focus on freedom is clear enough in Kautilya as far as the upper classes are concerned. It contrasts with the governmental duties to the lower orders, which take the paternalistic form of state assistance for the avoidance of acute deprivation and misery. Still, insofar as a view of the good life emerges in all this, it is an ideal that is entirely consistent with a freedom-valuing ethical system. Its domain is limited, to be sure; but this is not wildly different from the Greek concern with free men as opposed to slaves or women.

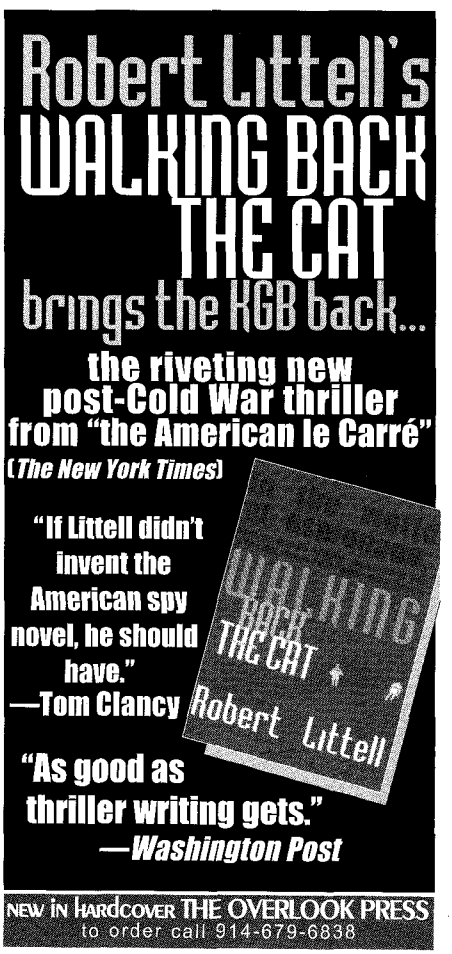
I have been discussing in some detail the political ideas and practical reason presented by two forceful, but very different, expositions in India respectively in the fourth and third centuries B.C., because their ideas have influenced later Indian writings. I do not want to give the impression that all Indian political commentators took lines of approach similar to Ashoka's or Kautilya's. Quite the contrary. There are many positions, before and after Kautilya and Ashoka, that contradict their respective claims, just as there are others that are more in line with Ashoka or Kautilya.

The importance of tolerance, even the need for its universality, is eloquently expressed in different media: in Shudraka's drama, in Akbar's political pronouncements, and in Kabir's poetry, to name just a few examples. The presence of these contributions does not entail the absence of opposite arguments and recommendations. The point, rather, is that the heterogeneity of Indian traditions contains a variety of views and reasonings, and they include, in different ways, arguments in favor of tolerance, of freedom, and even (in the case of Ashoka) of equality at a very basic level.

Among the powerful expositors and practitioners of tolerance of diversity in India, of course, we must count the great Moghul emperor Akbar, who reigned between 1556 and 1605. Again, we are not dealing here with a democrat. He was, instead, a powerful king who emphasized the acceptability of diverse forms of social and religious behavior, and who accepted human rights of various kinds, including freedom of worship and religious practice, that would not have been so easily tolerated in parts of Europe in Akbar's time.

Consider an example. As the year 1000 in the Muslim Hijra calendar was reached in 1591-92, there was excitement about it in Delhi and Agra (not unlike what is happening now, as the Christian year 2000 approaches). Akbar issued various enactments at this juncture of history, and these focused *inter alia* on religious tolerance, including the following:

> No man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone [is] to be allowed to go over to a religion he pleased.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> If a Hindu, when a child or otherwise, had been made a Muslim against his will, he is to be allowed, if he pleased, to go back to the religion of his fathers.

Again, the domain of tolerance, while neutral with respect to religion, was not universal in other respects—with respect to gender equality, or to equality between younger and older people. Akbar's enactment went on to argue for the forcible repatriation of a young Hindu woman to her father's family if she had abandoned it in pursuit of a Muslim lover. In the choice between supporting the young lovers and the young woman's Hindu father, old Akbar's sympathies are entirely with the father. Tolerance and equality at one level are combined with intolerance and inequality at another level. And yet the extent of general tolerance on matters of belief and practice is quite remarkable. It may not be irrelevant to note, especially in the light of the hard sell of "Western liberalism," that while Akbar was making these pronouncements on religious tolerance, the Inquisition was in full throttle in Europe.

IV.

It is important to recognize that many of these historical leaders in Asia not only emphasized the importance of freedom and tolerance, they also had clear theories as to why this is the appropriate thing to do. This would apply very strongly to Ashoka and Akbar. Since the Islamic tradition is sometimes seen as being monolithic, this is particularly important to emphasize in the case of Akbar. Akbar was a Muslim emperor who was deeply interested in Hindu philosophy and culture, and he also took much interest in the beliefs and practices of other religions, including Christianity, Jainism and the Parsee faith. In fact, he also attempted to establish something of a synthetic religion for India, the *Din Ilahi*, drawing on the different faiths in the country.

There is an interesting contrast here between Ashoka's and Akbar's forms of religious tolerance. Both stood for religious tolerance by the state, and both argued for tolerance as a virtue to be practiced by all. But Ashoka combined this with his own Buddhist pursuits (and tried to spread its "enlightenment" at home and abroad), while Akbar tried to "combine" the distinct religions of India, incorporating the "good points" of different religions. Akbar's court was filled with Hindu as well as Muslim intellectuals, artists, and musicians, and he tried in every way to be nonsectarian and fair in the treatment of his subjects.

It is also important to note that Akbar was not unique among the Moghul emperors in being tolerant. In many ways, the later Moghul emperor, the very intolerant Aurangzeb, who violated many of what we would now call the human rights of Hindus, was something of an exception to the Moghul rule. The exponents of Hindu politics in contemporary India often try to deny the tolerant nature of much of Moghul rule, but this tolerance was handsomely acknowledged by Hindu leaders of an earlier vintage. Sri Aurobindo, for example, who established the famous ashram in Pondicherry, specifically identified this aspect of the Moghul rule: "[T]he Mussulman domination ceased very rapidly to be a foreign rule.... The Moghul empire was a great and magnificent construction and an immense amount of political genius and talent was employed in its creation and maintenance. It was splendid, powerful and beneficent and, it may be added, in spite of Aurangzeb's fanatical zeal, infinitely more liberal and tolerant in religion than any medieval or contemporary European kingdom or empire."

And, even in the case of Aurangzeb, it is useful to consider him not in isolation, but in his familial setting. For none of his immediate family seemed to have shared Aurangzeb's intolerance. Dara Shikoh, his elder brother, was much involved with Hindu philosophy and, with the help of some scholars, he prepared a Persian translation of some of the *Upanishads*, the ancient texts dating from about the eighth century B.C. In fact, Dara had much stronger claims to the Moghul throne than Aurangzeb, since he was the eldest and the favorite son of his father, the emperor Shah Jahan. Aurangzeb fought and killed his brother Dara, and imprisoned his father, Shah Jahan, for the rest of his life (leaving him, the builder of the Taj Mahal, to gaze at his creation in captivity).

Aurangzeb's son, also called Akbar, rebelled against his father in 1681 and joined hands in this enterprise with the Hindu kingdoms in Rajasthan and later the Marathas. (Akbar's rebellion was ultimately crushed by Aurangzeb.) While fighting from Rajasthan, Akbar wrote to his father, protesting his intolerance and his vilification of his Hindu friends. Indeed, the issue of the tolerance of differences was a subject of considerable discussion among the feuding parties. The father of the Maratha king, Raja Sambhaji, whom the young Akbar had joined, was none other than Shivaji, whom the present-day Hindu political activists treat as a super-hero, and after whom the intolerant Hindu party Shiv Sena is named.

Shivaji took quite a tolerant view of religious differences. As the Moghul historian Khafi Khan, no admirer of Shivaji in other respects, reports: "[Shivaji] made it a rule that wherever his followers were plundering, they should do no harm to the mosques, the book of God, or the women of anyone. Whenever a copy of the sacred Quran came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to some of his Mussulman followers." A very interesting letter to Aurangzeb on the subject of tolerance is attributed to Shivaji by some historians (such as Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the author of the classic *Shivaji and His Times*, published in 1919), though there are some doubts about this attribution. No matter who among Aurangzeb's Hindu contemporaries wrote this letter, the ideas in it are interesting. The text contrasts Aurangzeb's intolerance with the liberal policies of earlier Moghuls (Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan), and then says: "If Your Majesty places any faith in those books by distinction called divine, you will there be instructed that God is the God of all mankind, not the God of Muslims alone. The Pagan and the Muslim are equally in His presence.... In fine, the tribute you demand from the Hindus is repugnant to justice."

The subject of tolerance was much discussed by many writers during this period of confrontation between the religious traditions and their associated politics. One of the earliest writers on this subject was the eleventh century Iranian writer Alberuni, who came to India with the invading army of Mahmood of Ghazni and recorded his revulsion at the atrocities committed by the invaders. He proceeded to study Indian society, culture, religion, and ideas (his translations of Indian mathematical and astronomical treatises were quite influential in the Arab world, which in turn was deeply influential on Western mathematics), and he also wrote on the subject of the intolerance of the unfamiliar.

> ... in all manners and usages, [the Hindus] differ from us to such a degree as to frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs, and as to declare us to be devil's breed, and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and proper. By the bye, we must confess, in order to be just, that a similar depreciation of foreigners not only prevails among us and the Hindus, but is common to all nations towards each other.

The point of discussing all this now is to demonstrate the presence of conscious theorizing about tolerance and freedom in substantial and important parts of the Asian traditions. We could consider many more illustrations of this

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phenomenon from writings in early Arabic, Chinese, Indian and other cultures. Again, the championing of democracy and political freedom in the modern sense cannot be found in the pre-enlightenment tradition in any part of the world, West or East. What we have to investigate, instead, are the constituents, the components, of this compound idea. It is the powerful presence of some of these elements—in non-Western as well as Western societies—that I have been emphasizing. It is hard to make sense of the view that the basic ideas underlying freedom and rights in a tolerant society are "Western" notions, and somehow alien to Asia, though that view has been championed by Asian authoritarians and Western chauvinists.

V.

I would like to conclude with a rather different issue, which is sometimes linked to the debate about the nature and the reach of Asian values. The championing of Asian values is often associated with the need to resist Western hegemony. The linkage of the two issues, which has increasingly occurred in recent years, uses the political force of anticolonialism to buttress the assault on civil and political rights in post-colonial Asia.

This linkage, though quite artificial, can be rhetorically quite effective. Thus Lee Kuan Yew has emphasized the special nature of Asian values, and has made powerful use of the general case for resisting Western hegemony to bolster the argument for Asian particularism. The rhetoric has extended to the apparently defiant declaration that Singapore is "not a client state of America." This fact is certainly undeniable, and it is an excellent reason for cheer, but the question that has to be asked is what this has to do with the issue of human rights and political liberties in Singapore, or any other country in Asia.

The people whose political and other rights are involved in this debate are not citizens of the West, but of Asian countries. The fact that individual liberty may have been championed in Western writings, and even by some Western political leaders, can scarcely compromise the claim to liberty that people in Asia may otherwise possess. As a matter of fact, one may grumble, with reason, that the political leaders of Western countries take far too *little* interest in issues of freedom in the rest of the world. There is plenty of evidence that the Western governments have tended to give priority to the interests of their own citizens engaged in commerce with the Asian countries and to the pressures generated by business groups to be on good terms with the ruling governments in Asia. It is not that there has been more bark than bite; there has been very little bark, too. What Mao once described as a "paper tiger" looks increasingly like a paper mouse.

But even if this were not the case, and even if it were true that Western governments try to promote political and civil rights in Asia, how can that possibly compromise the status of the rights of Asians? In this context, the idea of "human rights" has to be properly understood. In the most general form, the notion of human rights builds on our shared humanity. These rights are not derived from citizenship in any country, or membership in any nation. They are taken as entitlements of every human being. These rights differ, therefore, from constitutionally created rights guaranteed for specified people (such as American citizens or French nationals). The human right of a person not to be tortured is affirmed independently of the country of which this person is a citizen, and also irrespective of what the government of that country—or any other country—wants to do. Of course, a government can dispute a person's *legal* right not to be tortured, but that will not amount to disputing what must be seen as the person's *human* right not to be tortured.

Since the conception of human rights transcends local legislation and the citizenship of the individual, the support for human rights can come from anyone—whether or not she is a citizen of the same country as the individual whose rights are threatened. A foreigner does not need the permission of a repressive government to try to help a person whose liberties are being violated. Indeed, insofar as human rights are seen as rights that any person has as a human being (and not as a citizen of any particular country), the reach of the corresponding duties can also include any human being (irrespective of citizenship).

This basic recognition does not suggest, of course, that everyone must intervene constantly in protecting and helping others. That may be both ineffective and unsettling. There is no escape from the need to employ practical reason in this field, any more than in any other field of human action. Ubiquitous interventionism is not particularly fruitful or attractive within a given nation, nor is it across national boundaries. There is no obligation to roam the four corners of the earth in search of

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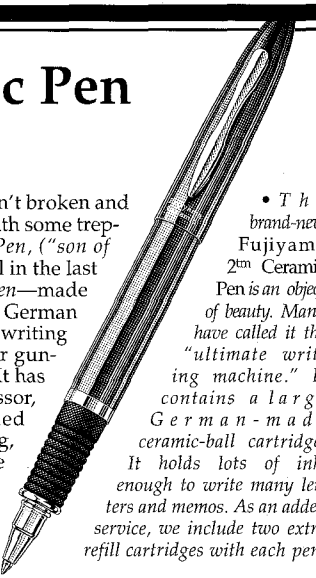

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liberties to protect. My claim is only that the barriers of nationality and citizenship do not preclude people from taking legitimate interest in the rights of others and even from assuming some duties related to them. The moral and political examination that is central to determining how one should act applies across national boundaries, and not merely within them.

To conclude, the so-called Asian values that are invoked to justify authoritarianism are not especially Asian in any significant sense. Nor is it easy to see how they could be made, by the mere force of rhetoric, into an Asian cause against the West. The people whose rights are being disputed are Asians, and, no matter what the West's guilt may be (there are many skeletons in many closets throughout the world), the rights of Asians can scarcely be compromised on those grounds. The case for liberty and political rights turns ultimately on their basic importance and on their instrumental role. And this case is as strong in Asia as it is elsewhere.

There is a great deal that we can learn from studies of values in Asia and Europe, but they do not support or sustain the thesis of a grand dichotomy (or a "clash of civilizations"). Our ideas of political and personal rights have taken their particular form relatively recently, and it is hard to see them as "traditional" commitments of Western cultures. There are important antecedents of those commitments, but those antecedents can be found plentifully in Asian cultures as well as Western cultures.

The recognition of diversity within different cultures is extremely important in the contemporary world, since we are constantly bombarded by oversimple generalizations about "Western civilization," "Asian values," "African cultures," and so on. These unfounded readings of history and civilization are not only intellectually shallow, they also add to the divisiveness of the world in which we live. The authoritarian readings of Asian values that are increasingly championed in some quarters do not survive scrutiny. And the grand dichotomy between Asian values and European values adds little to our understanding, and much to the confounding of the normative basis of freedom and democracy. •

Wolf in Wolf's Clothing

By Ian Buruma

Man Without a Face: The Autobiography of Communism's Greatest Spymaster by Markus Wolf with Anne McElvoy

(Times Books, 352 pp., $25)

Even the most revolting regimes usually have at least one dapper little charmer in their highest ranks, the type of guy who gives wickedness a human face, a well-mannered, well-dressed, well-educated diner with the devil. Such figures—Albert Speer, say, or Zhou En-lai—hold a special fascination for many people. They perform a triple function. For a start, they make it easier to justify one's own fellow-travelling follies. If Maoism was good enough for a nice man like Zhou, why then should I feel bad about having admired the little red book myself? Or, a variation on the theme: if Maoism was good enough for a nice man like Zhou, it can't have been all bad.

Then there is the glamour attached to the elegant rogue. The suave gangster with impeccable manners and a fine library is a sexier, more mysterious figure than the uncouth thug. The exquisite exterior, hiding a heart of darkness: What greater frisson can one desire? And the third reason for our fascination with these smoothies is that they make us wonder what such sophisticates are doing in the company of gangsters, murderers and oppressors. The perplexity, of course, is naïve. After all, why should murderers or oppressors be men without breeding or taste? Hans Frank, the Nazi slavemaster in Cracow, is said to have played Chopin beautifully. Still, our belief in the redeeming power of culture keeps us wondering.

Not every member of the former East German Ministry of State Security (Stasi) was a gangster, but most were certainly less than couth. This is why the subject at hand, the man whose face we now know well, General Markus "Mischa" Wolf, stands out. He is the Speer, the Zhou, the Dapper Don of the Stasi. By most accounts this smoothest of operators, who was East Germany's spymaster for almost forty years, is excellent company. So what *was* this nice, thoughtful, cultivated, handsome man doing with all those fat-necked "heads of concrete"?

There is a magical moment in Marcel Ophuls's *November Days*, his documentary about the fall of the Berlin Wall, when he interviews Wolf at the great spy's dacha. Wolf waves away any suggestion that he knew anything about the building of the Wall, or about torture in Stasi jails, or about blackmailing people. All that was done by others. He, Wolf, was a gentleman doing his duty. Ophuls then decides, quite deliberately, to play the Jewish card. Both men grew up in Germany, with Jewish fathers, who were forced to escape the Nazis—Wolf's father, Friedrich, took his family to Moscow; Marcel's father, Max, took his family to Hollywood. Ophuls tries to shame Wolf by comparing him to Klaus Barbie. The ploy doesn't work. Wolf simply denies that he ever used, or countenanced the use of, violence. Quite the contrary, he says. The trouble with him is that he was always too naïve, too trusting. He smiles sweetly, accepts a cigarette, sits back and prepares to launch into an amusing anecdote about compromising an enemy of the people with a girl. Ophuls watches him quietly, sadly, and we hear the music from one of his father's Hollywood movies. "Listening to you," he says, "I think to myself, Marcel, how lucky you are. Our fathers had the same ideas. Who wasn't on the left in the Weimar Republic? But how lucky I am that the film director, Max Ophuls, decided to move West instead of East."

But this lets Wolf off the hook too easily. It suggests that he was entirely a victim of circumstances, a man whose life was plotted for him, a helpless refugee trapped in Stalin's empire. You almost forget that there were many other communist refugees who left the Soviet bloc (if they hadn't been killed in some purge), and few, if any, of them became Stasi generals. Yet the idea rather tickles Wolf's own fancy. Yes, he says, Ophuls might well have a point. Wolf, in his book, which serves no one so well as himself, is always the humble servant of a kind of moral *force majeure*: superior orders, the higher call of duty, patriotism, idealism, and so forth. But here he gives his tale a particular spin, clearly aimed at hooking our sympathies: it is the argument of *Man Without a Face* that the story of Markus Wolf is the story of a good Jew who spent his whole life fighting fascism.

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The dishonesty with which Wolf presents this case is almost childish. In the opening chapter, we are told that, although his mother was a Gentile, Wolf was "Jewish enough to have been categorized and persecuted under the Nuremberg racial laws promulgated in 1936...." He goes on to say that although his ideology and "the ruptures of the Cold War" should have made him an enemy of Israel, he always retained "an interest in Jewish affairs." Never mind that the Nuremberg laws date from 1935, and that Wolf would have been counted as a *Mischling*, a somewhat safer category than a Jew. The point here is that his victim status is meant to excuse his role in persecuting others. "Jewish affairs," he says piously. What Jewish affairs? If Wolf felt such a bond with the Jewish people, what was he doing training PLO terrorists?

Near the end of his book, Wolf repeats his main apologia: "Hitler's long shadow was one of the reasons I agreed to the idea of working for a secret service." West Germany, you see, was still full of ex-Nazis, whose plots to revive the Third Reich had to be stopped by whatever means possible. Earlier on, however, Wolf gives a more plausible explanation for his peculiar career move. It could be summed up in that fine German phrase: *Befehl ist Befehl.* In 1952, he was a young communist on the make in Berlin, and Walter Ulbricht ordered him to run his spy operation. As Wolf puts it, "refusal would have been impossible, given my understanding of duty, Party discipline, and the demands of the Cold War."

The antifascist cause hoodwinked a great many people. Yet I do not believe, after reading Wolf's book, that he was really taken in. It is true that many Germans, including some prominent Jewish artists and intellectuals, believed that the German Democratic Republic would be the "good" Germany, which would purge the nation of its Nazi past. Since Hitler declared war on Bolshevism and attacked the Soviet Union, communism gained respectability as the vanguard of antifascism. To some deluded Europeans—the Cambridge spies, for example—Moscow was the only hope against the Nazis. True believers, encouraged by Soviet propaganda, concluded that any enemy of communism had to be a fascist.

This attitude had a profound influence on the cold war, especially in Germany. West German leftists and liberals, many of whom came of age around 1968, reading Marcuse, Adorno, and Chomsky, were haunted by the idea that the capitalist state was dominated by

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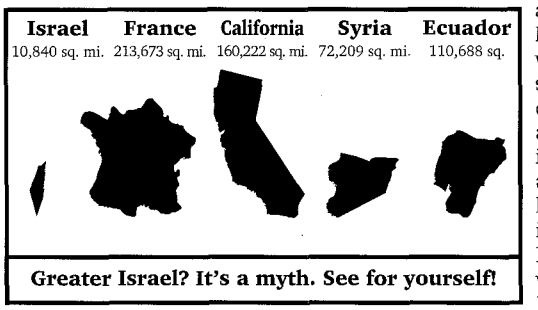
Israel's Borders. "Palestine," part of the Ottoman Empire before World War I, came under British mandate after that war. The Golan Heights were part of Palestine. Israel's current borders are the result of the 1948 War of Independence, in which six Arab armies invaded the new-born state, but were utterly defeated, and the 1967 Six-Day War, in which those same armies once again invaded Israel. In that war, Israel conquered the Gaza Strip, the vast Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. And Israel also *repossessed* the provinces of Judea/Sumaria, (the "West Bank"), and the eastern part of Jerusalem, which had been occupied by the Jordanians nineteen years earlier, when they invaded the just new-born Jewish state. In order to achieve peace with Egypt, Israel returned to it all of the Sinai. Israel is and has always been prepared to grant full autonomy to the Arabs living in Judea/Sumaria. It is clear to all knowledgeable in military matters that, for immutable strategic reason, Israel cannot for any foreseeable future abandon or yield military control of Judea/Sumaria (the "West Bank") and of the Golan Heights.

The Myth of Greater Israel. Israel is one of the smallest countries in the world. Most people don't realize how small it really is. One wonders whether those who keep talking about "Greater Israel" and who wish to pressure Israel to divest itself of a big chunk of its territory are aware of it. A look at the map is revealing. Including the vaunted "West Bank," the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights, the entire area of the country is barely over 10,000 square miles. France is twenty times as large as Israel, California fifteen times as large, Syria about seven times as large, and "tiny" Ecuador ten times as large. Israel is so small that its area is less than half the size of San Bernardino County, California; if it were dropped into Lake Michigan it would disappear from sight without a trace. The Arab counties in contrast are huge—they occupy twice the area of the United States. Greater Israel, indeed!



Greater Israel? It's a myth. See for yourself!

It is clear that the concept of "Greater Israel," lacks any validity and has no basis in fact. To apply such a concept to a country as small as Israel would almost seem a mockery. Obviously, Israel has no territorial ambitions. All it wants is to live in peace within secure and defensible borders, just as any other country and as required under U.N. Resolution No. 242. But it seems that the *size* of Israel, whether "greater" or "lesser" is not at all the concern of Israel's implacable Arab enemies. The very *existence* of Israel, of a Jewish state in their midst of whatever size, is unacceptable to the Arabs. And unless that mindset changes, not until the Arab states have become democracies and have come to full acceptance of Israel, are willing to make *true* peace with it, and are prepared to establish normal and friendly relations with Israel can any possible territorial adjustment be considered. As it looks right now, that may still take some time.

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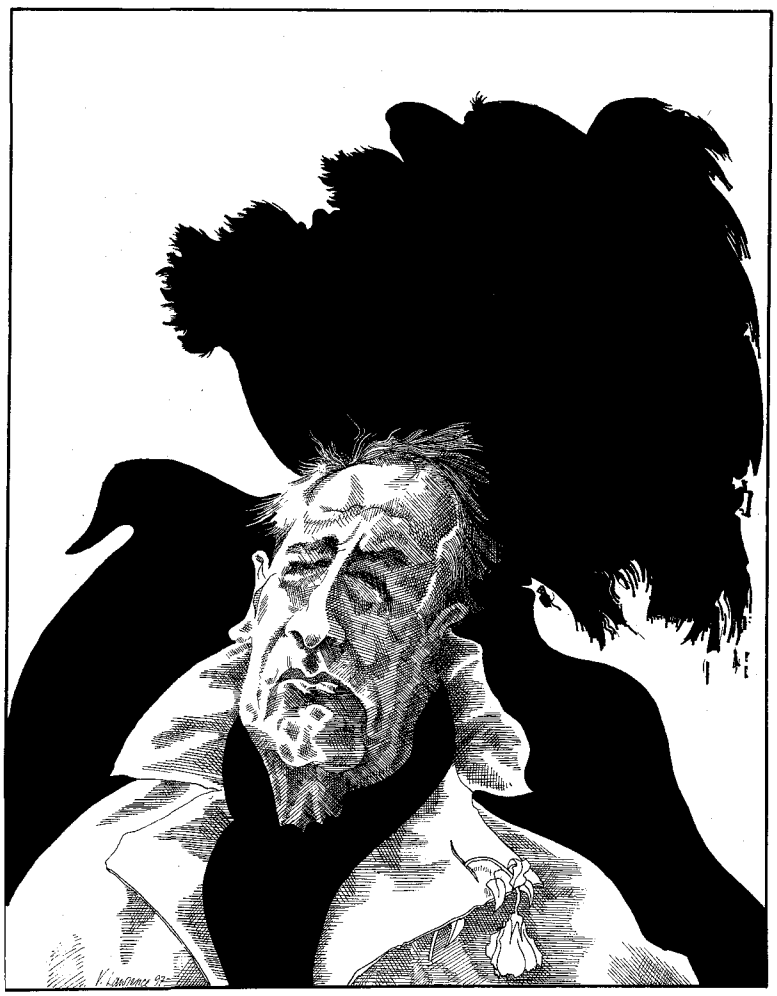
ex-Nazis, that the Fourth Reich was just around the corner. West German capitalism was seen by the "antifascists" as a disguised continuation of Nazism. Wolf's Stasi did everything to promote this notion by publishing the names of old Nazis whenever they popped up in the federal government. (And some did pop up.) Many young West Germans were also filled with displaced guilt for their parents' lack of resistance to, or active liking of, Hitler. *They* would not make the same mistake. They would resist fascism wherever it reared its nasty head—in Germany, of course, but also in Israel, Vietnam or Latin America. The main enemies of Markus Wolf's state were Zionism, American imperialism, and West German capitalism. Since Wolf's state was fighting "fascism," all his enemies were ipso facto fascists.

It is not surprising, then, that West German "antifa" circles were the perfect breeding ground for Wolf's recruits. His insights into the mentality of such people are invariably interesting. One of his best spies in the West was "Gaby" Gast, the highest-placed woman in the West German intelligence service. Typically, Wolf first sent one of his men to seduce this rather pathetic woman, but there was genuine political sentiment there to exploit. Gaby once sent a book to Wolf about Nuremberg, inscribed with these words: "The Old still lurks beneath the façade of the New. Thirty Years after Nuremberg, the struggle for the New must go on." That was the great thing about communism: it was forever New.

One of Wolf's great assets as a cold war spymaster was his understanding of the psychology of his recruits, perhaps because he shared it to some extent. Thus he observes that Gaby liked the feeling of belonging to a special community. The idea of being part of "an elite, a secretive club fighting for a noble ideal," he says, was "of particular importance to Westerners from upper-middle-class backgrounds with strong and complex personalities." One immediately thinks of Guy Burgess or Anthony Blunt—but also, I guess, of Markus Wolf himself. The potent mix of idealism, secret power and snobbery should never be underestimated.

Wolf's background is undoubtedly on the upper end of the middle class. As well as being a devout Communist, his father, Friedrich, was a doctor and a famous playwright. Where did the idealism come from? Once again, Wolf brings up the Jewish factor. His father's "journey from humanitarian to communist," he says, "was strongly influenced by his social awareness as a German of Jewish ancestry." Well, I wonder. To be sure, communism had an egalitarian, internationalist appeal to many Jews, starting with that well-known anti-Semite Karl Marx. But the story of Friedrich Wolf strikes me as more German than Jewish. His conversion to the communist creed took place long before Hitler became a figure on the scene. In fact, Hitler, so far as one can see, had nothing to do with it.

Friedrich Wolf was the son of a small-town haberdasher. According to Markus, his grandparents were pious Jews who wanted their son to be a rabbi. This may be yet another attempt to tug at our heartstrings. There is no evidence for this story. Quite the contrary, Alexander Reichenbach, one of Markus Wolf's biographers, found that Friedrich's parents pressed him to become a doctor—also a Jewish tradition, but a less exotic kind. As a student, Friedrich developed enthusiasms that might sound a bit cranky to us, but were common in the Germany of his youth. He became a fervent lover of nature, of simple, natural folk with simple, natural folk culture. To escape from the decadent materialism of urban civilization, he started a *Wandervogel* group with fellow naturalists. They studied folkish ways, went on long walks, sang folkish songs, ate only vegetables and did a great deal of open air gymnastics. Later, Friedrich gained fame as a naturalist with a book called *Nature as Healer and Helper*, richly illustrated with photographs of Friedrich striking nude poses with spears, or engaging in calisthenics. In those pictures you may see also the future Stasi general in the nude, riding his father's well-toned thighs.



MARKUS WOLF BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The author of an East German hagiography observes that Friedrich's folkish, naturalist zeal rather lent itself to fascism, but that he chose to be on the side of the proletariat instead. World War One came. Friedrich was keen at first, but the shock of the battlefield carnage convinced him that only communism would defeat militarism and guarantee world peace. This insight dawned in 1918, but he became an official member of the German Communist Party only ten years later. Before that date he had glimpses of alternative utopias: Tolstoy in particular was an early guru. Markus must have inherited some of his father's weakness for woolly philosophers. He refers to Daisaku Ikeda, a ruthless operator who runs the Soka Gakkai, a shallow, semi-Buddhist organization, as a "great contemporary Japanese philosopher."

In the 1920s, Wolf wrote ideological plays about the rottenness of bourgeois society and the glorious proletarian future. He also saw the sun shining from Moscow. Already in 1925, he wrote to his mother that he felt "drawn east." The

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fact, then, that he decided to seek refuge in the Soviet Union, when Hitler came to power, was not a coincidence. Although he remained a patriotic German, Moscow was his Mecca. Markus does not disguise the price that his father paid for this, when the family moved there in 1934. This was not a good time, after all, to be in Russia. Wolf describes, rather delicately, how many of his schoolteachers "disappeared" during Stalin's purges. Even his own father, the playwright who had extolled Soviet Union communism as the path to future paradise, was terrified. "When the doorbell rang unexpectedly one night, my usually calm father leapt to his feet and let out a violent curse. When it emerged that the visitor was only a neighbor intent on borrowing something, he regained his savoir-faire, but his hands trembled for a good half hour."

This, you might think, would be enough to put a person off communism for life. But Wolf explains that he was incapable himself of seeing "our socialist system" as a tyranny. He overlooked Stalin's crimes because the family had been rescued from the Nazis. But this doesn't explain the commitment of his father, whose conversion happened earlier and lasted to his death. Friedrich Wolf remained a dreamer. Despite Stalinism, the purges, the millions of deaths, he kept the faith. The interesting question is whether the same is true of his son.

In his book, Wolf says that he still believes in Communism. His concluding words are: "*A demain, Karl. Until Tomorrow, Karl.*" It sounds like a bad line in one of his father's plays. Wolf still cannot bring himself to believe that there was anything wrong with the theory itself. All that was wrong was the manner in which the theory was put into practice. Stalin's crimes, he says, in the tired old refrain, "were not the logical outcome of Communist theory, but a violation of communism." Maybe this is more than a self-serving justification. Maybe Wolf really believes it. It would be polite to give him the benefit of the doubt. Still, as he himself remarks, "one of the perils of being a spy chief is that you are not believed even when you do come clean."

Wolf's book does not leave me with the impression that idealism is what drives him. Political ideas do not seem his forte, or his main interest. If there is one sentence in the book that sounds completely credible, it is this one, about his father, who congratulated his son on acquiring Soviet citizenship in 1939, the very year that Hitler made a pact with Stalin. "... [A]s I grew older, I realized that my father's infectious utopianism was not my natural leaning. I was of a more pragmatic temperament." This is Markus Wolf, the ambitious technocrat, the shrewd climber up any available ladder, speaking. From the Soviet Young Pioneers to the Comintern School, from the Ministry of State Security to the talk show circuit and the book tour, Wolf has convincingly demonstrated one thing: he knows how to operate.

Far from being naïve or trustful or idealistic, Wolf comes across as an essentially cynical man who knows how to manipulate people to his own ends. That is what made him a superb spy chief. It is also, I suppose, what makes him better company than the fanatical ideologues or humorless drudges with whom he spent much of his working life. The mover who knows how to get on in any regime can be witty and worldly-wise. But that doesn't make him in any way less reprehensible.

IAN BURUMA's most recent book is *The Missionary and the Libertine: Love and War in East and West* (Faber and Faber).

Last Exit to Brooklyn

BY ROBERT WORTH

The Ordinary Seaman by Francisco Goldman

(Atlantic Monthly Press, 387 pp., $23)

At one point in Francisco Goldman's novel, a former Sandinista soldier asks his companion:

> "You know what we learned to drink in the jungle? ... the juice inside a monkey's stomach. You kill a monkey and take out its stomach and poke a hole in it"—and he lifted his hands to his lips and mimed holding a wobbly sphere, which he slowly deflated in his long, spread fingers. Monkey stomach juice tasted like sweet fruit pulp blended with urine and grass.

Like the veteran, Goldman wants to shock his readers, to bring them face to face with war and hunger. Goldman, who is half Guatemalan, has been reporting on Central American politics for over a decade, and the themes of his fiction (and even some of the names and the characters) flow directly from his work as a journalist. Although his prose is often richly inventive, he prefers to bring us down to street-level, often in a dialect studded with Spanish curses and vivid obscenities: "Vos, you know what that truck sounded like?" one of his characters asks. "Like hundreds of honking little Cuban patos in cages all going *coño coño coño coño*!"

The protagonists of this novel are a group of desperate Central Americans who have been lured to New York with the promise of work on board a freighter. After a few months of unpaid repair work in port, their employers abandon them on the rotting ship. They become refugees by default, surviving on rice and sardines from the rat-infested hold. Only Esteban, the 19-year-old ordinary seaman of the title, is willing to abandon the ship and to explore the city that lies beyond. By the novel's end, he will find his way into the illegal immigrant community of Brooklyn, and most of his fellow seamen will be discovered and deported.

Goldman's sailors are involuntary exiles, the flotsam of political ruin. It is no accident that the novel is set in the summer and fall of 1989, during the death throes of communism in Eastern Europe and just before the fall of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, for whom Esteban has fought. Goldman wants to tell a story of radical disenchantment: men who have lost not only the tattered myth and religion of their homeland, but also the consoling Marxist ideology that was supposed to replace it.

Esteban remembers his indoctrination, performed by a political officer in his battalion "who was supposed to teach them about the Law of True Value, proletarians, lumpen, democracy, perestroika—words handed to them like extra bullet clips...." This verbal ammunition was not all political; the Sandinistas actually sent poets and artists to the front lines (an effort that Goldman described as a journalist during the 1980s) to inspire their *compas*. Esteban recalls his baffled response: "Knowing you had to kill and why, you were supposed to find a way to speak of love. What was it you were supposed to love? Claro, la Revolucion, which was like a poem you

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were supposed to be writing in your head...."

The poem ends when Esteban hears reports on the radio about the collapse of communism in the East. He is reminded of his lover Marta, who died for the revolution and whose watch he still wears. He imagines his political officer "talking and talking and talking now, trying to put the world back together, no? And here I am in Brooklyn, where I'm nothing ... here, with La Marta's watch—he takes it out of his pocket. It's just past eleven." Esteban repeats this gesture again and again, staring at his dead lover's watch like a talisman of the only reality that means anything to him. It is a plastic Mickey Mouse watch, one of the novel's many derelict ironies.

Much of the pathos of *The Ordinary Seaman* comes from Esteban's struggle to relinquish his traumatic past and leave the ship. He is helped by his bunkmate Bernardo, an aging fellow Nicaraguan who joined the crew in the hope of making some money for his three daughters in Managua. Bernardo is a realist; he sees at once that the ship will never sail, and he names the stray cat who becomes their mascot Desastres. During the months they spend waiting in port, he loses his last illusions about Nicaragua and its "squalid fratridical war that has bled the country even of chickens and eggs." He offers his final shreds of hope to Esteban, persuading him to give up on the past and escape into New York. Then he dies, the victim of a simple burn that the ship's owners are too cheap to treat.

The owners of the docked ship remain shadowy figures through much of the novel, partly because they pass themselves off to the crew as the captain and first mate, hired to help overhaul the boat for inspection. Goldman fleshes them out somewhat hurriedly, by way of an extended flashback that is meant to show that their evil is banal, that they are not so much cruel as self-deluded. We see them becoming friends at a second-rate college in upstate New York, then flailing through business and romantic failures. Pushing 40, they buy the ship and hire a crew to repair it in a desperate bid for financial security. When the plan begins to fall apart, they are too anxious about their own failures to see the suffering that they have caused. One of them treats Bernardo's burn with herbal medicine, refusing to admit to himself that it will not work. Days later, when the wound has turned gangrenous, the owner reluctantly agrees to take Bernardo to the hospital. He leaves the dying man on the emergency room floor, too frightened to give his name, then flees, reassuring himself that he has done the right thing.

This kind of passive cruelty seems to be Goldman's quarry throughout the book. He wants to show how it feels to be on the receiving end of North American moral blindness toward the dispossessed. It is a significant shift from his first novel, *The Long Night of White Chickens* (1992), which was focused on the more active and indigenous horrors of Guatemala's civil war. There evil was clear and unmistakable, though the narrator had only one memorable encounter with it, in the form of a Guatemalan death squad:

> Heavy mestizo faces, hard black-beetle eyes.... Only one wore sunglasses. Two in black leather jackets, one wearing denim, the other in jacket and tie. Big guys with big faces. All of this happened in an instant, right in front of that small private hospital just down the block. Where were the schoolgirls now, or anyone else? Why didn't anyone scream? Four murderers staring, just beginning to lift their guns like mariachi musicians lifting their instruments ...

That is all. The narrator leaps onto a bus, and we never see the death squad again.

In his new novel, Goldman does not allow himself any such escapes. Instead, he makes the evil of the ship's owners symptomatic of a larger world in which the reader is included. Toward the end of the novel, when disaster is in the offing, one of the owners of the ship satirically composes a "Talk of the Town" piece in his head about "How to comport yourself at a dinner party with wealthy young artistes, liberal do-nothings ... when you happen to own a secret slave ship in New York Harbor." The speaker's irony here is meant to suggest that abusing the crew and exploiting their story are related acts. The same irony afflicts the "Ship Visitor," a pro bono lawyer who discovers the abandoned crew and ultimately saves them. He tries not to think about it this way, telling his glamorous girlfriend that what he likes is simply "getting to make a difference in the lives of people that hardly anyone ever thinks about." But he knows that what she likes is the real-world frisson that his sea stories provoke in her jaded and wealthy circle of friends. Once he has told them all, she will abandon him.

These derelictions may help to unify the novel's theme, but they also cut into the depth of its plot and its characterization. It is as if the disenchantment that Goldman describes had infected his writing. He inhabits his villains too briefly and fails to build their lives into a compelling story. Despite moments of private doubt and despair, the ship's owners come off as cynical thugs, unworthy of empathy. In the same way, the sailors often seem only victims, men whose lives have been covered over with scar tissue. Their memories are vivid, but in the present tense of the novel they are passive ghosts, hard to tell apart. One of them is a Guatemalan who has been so traumatized by his country's civil war that the other sailors know him as Caratumba ("tomb-face"). Like Esteban's, his mind revolves ceaselessly around the memory of his lover's murder:

> A pooled tributary covered with hyacinths, the water sweet and crystal clear, the bottom's white sand rising in sugary clouds around their feet, they'd made love and were now swimming around naked when the first shot scattered their shimmering delight, fired from the tall reeds, and then another shot; he ducked underwater and saw her sinking with blood billowing from her head like a magenta flare and knew she was dead and swam away as far as he could ...

Passages such as this flicker through the novel like dreams. But they don't build into a recognizable sensibility. These are fractured lives, men without past or future. Goldman cannot give them too much depth because their wounded shallowness is part of his point. Even Esteban, the fullest character, is a narrow man, focused obsessively on the traumas that have shaped him. When he starts to move beyond his past, leaving the ship to find an illegal factory job and a Mexican girlfriend, he becomes a mere survivor: dead to his world, a blank novice in the new. This spiritual impoverishment may be the tragedy of contemporary immigration to America, but *The Ordinary Seaman* stages it too hurriedly, too resignedly. The novel ends just as Esteban's new life is getting underway.

This is the failure of a strong novelist who has not sufficiently disciplined his

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material. Goldman's first novel suffered from a similar recklessness, but the canvas was larger, the characters more developed. Instead of narrowing its range of vision to the victims or killers, Goldman's first novel approached the Guatemalan civil war through a half-Guatemalan, half-American narrator whose sister has been mysteriously murdered. His efforts to find the killer—which reach to the roots of the war itself—gave Goldman a more solid figure on which to hang the chaotic fabric of his narrator's subject. Like Gabriel García Márquez and Miguel Asturias (whom his characters quote), Goldman managed to invoke the voices of the dead and dispossessed without sacrificing his own cosmopolitan perspective or his savage humor.

The Long Night also showed that Goldman, for all his journalistic sobriety, can be playfully irreverent about his literary debts. The novel is prefaced by a quote from the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, whose gentle, lyrical poems put Central America on the cultural map at the turn of the century. The white swan in Darío's poem is transformed on Goldman's title page into white chickens—which will be slaughtered unceremoniously (like the heroine herself) in the course of the novel. This transfiguration carries a lesson: for the narrator, Darío's poetry is lovely but unreal. It is like the misty Guatemala that his mother invokes, which he derides as the "Empire of Beautiful Nostalgia." His own bicultural inheritance is more painful and complex, and requires a more varied literary register. As he puts it, "you've been born into a kind of labyrinth, you have to pick and choose your way through it and there's no getting back to the beginning because there isn't any one true point of origin."

This Borgesian metaphor begins to suggest what is missing from *The Ordinary Seaman*. The only labyrinth here is that of the stalled ship, where the crew lies awake at night, inhaling rust and paint, hearing the interminable scurry of the rats. There is real pathos in some of the stories that revolve around them; but one cannot help feeling that Goldman has given himself up too readily to the wasteland that he describes. It may be that he has given way to the cult of raw experience—the dirtier the better—that drives so much contemporary American fiction. One hopes not. Realism can survive without magic, but not without imagination.

ROBERT WORTH is a lecturer in English at Princeton University.

TRB *continued from page 6*

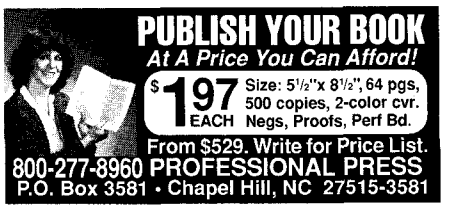
child under the age of 13 to ride in the front seat of a car. The NTSB has taken this step as a response to the fact that one of the government's previous efforts at making citizens do what is good for them, the requirement of air bags in cars, has had the unfortunate side effect of killing small children (forty in this decade) who were in the front seat when the air bags deployed. The new laws should correct for that, at the minor cost of making a lawbreaker out of every carpooling mother who lets her child ride next to her. Nursie knows best.

Or consider the case of Kevin Gillson, a 19-year-old Wisconsin man who recently ran afoul of the sex police. When Gillson was 18, he got his 15-year-old girlfriend pregnant. The sex was consensual, and the young lovers wanted to keep the child, marry and start their family. But Gillson's girlfriend was a minor, and so District Attorney Sandy Williams decided that it was in the people's interest to prosecute Gillson as a sex offender, a charge that carried a sentence of up to forty years. She won a conviction from jurors who later said they had been misled into thinking they had no choice but to convict under the law. Gillson was sentenced to two years probation.

Now comes the tobacco fix. Under the concerted attack of federal government forces led by the fanatical Food and Drug Commissioner David A. Kessler and by the attorneys general from forty states, the tobacco companies knuckled to a deal that will allow them to stay in their dubious business. With the states threatening years of class-action lawsuits on the grounds that the companies' products had cost the states money in Medicare and Medicaid payments for diseased smokers (if anything, it has been argued, smokers die younger, saving the government money), and with the FDA threatening to regulate cigarettes as a drug, the companies agreed to pay $368.5 billion over twenty-five years to a variety of groups and causes (including health insurance for poor children); to accept various and drastic bans on tobacco advertising; to pay for advertising campaigns *against* their products; to plaster 25 percent of each cigarette package with dire warnings; to accept some FDA regulation of nicotine; and, most unbelievably, to pay penalties of up to $2 billion a year if they fail to effect a reduction in teen smoking going from 42 percent within five years to 67 percent within ten years.

Kessler and his fellow Nurses were outraged at the deal. It didn't go far enough, they said. For them, it never will.

MICHAEL KELLY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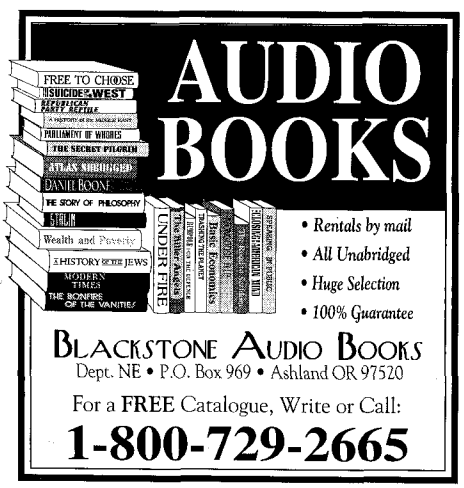

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

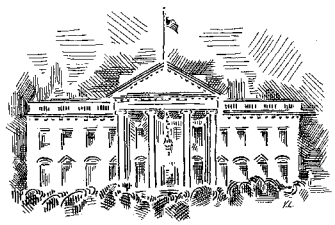
Red letter day

MOST MEMBERS OF THE OVER-achieving classes (that's you, dear TNR reader, if the circulation studies are correct) will perhaps identify with what I have just been through. Someone two years ahead of me in college, someone in whose London flat I have occasionally crashed, and in whose presence I have once or twice been a little drunk, has just been elected leader of Britain's Conservative Party. In these chastening circumstances, it seems to me that two options present themselves: (a) I can gracefully associate myself with him (the obvious purpose of this Diarist) or (b) rise in indignation to prove that his success is a sham, catastrophe or freak.

THE TROUBLE IS, I REALLY LIKE William Hague. You may have seen his prematurely balding pate on television last week, or read the obtuse reports of his triumph in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post.* He is described as "untested," his ascension—and early, canny appointments—regarded with bafflement. He is, after all, only 36. And he beat an entire older generation of more established, and more stereotypically centrist, politicians. Who would expect *The Washington Post* to understand? But the truth is, William is one of the shrewdest politicians to emerge in the West in quite a while.

I FIRST CAME ACROSS HIM ON TELEvision. It was a grim October afternoon in southern England, and I had skipped school at the age of 14 to watch the proceedings of the Tory Party conference (such were my adolescent improprieties). On that memorable day, in 1977, a blond, 16-year-old high-school student rose to address the massed ranks of retired colonels, constipated businessmen and blue-rinse matriarchs otherwise known as Tory activists. The speech, it turned out, was a media sensation, earning a standing ovation, dominating the national news that night and beginning, for William, a drumbeat of inevitability that has finally crescendoed. The speech was also a classic of the era. Hague spoke in a broad Yorkshire accent and, with the poise of a man twenty years older, intoned with perfect pitch all the boilerplate that my generation of anti-socialists thrilled to. It made such an impression on me that even now I can recall its cadences. It had sonorous, Churchillian phrases about "roll[ing] back the frontiers of the state"; and it was laced with humor. "It's all right for you," Hague gestured at one point to the blue-rinse brigade, referring to the grim future socialism promised. "You'll all be dead in a few years' time."

I FINALLY MET WILLIAM AT OXford. He was, like me, in Magdalen College, and chief don of a wonderfully corrupt political operation known as the "Magdalen Machine." The Machine was a constantly reinvented network of impressionable voters in Oxford Union elections, then as now the essential stepping stone to a future in the British political elite. In my freshman year, William was Union president, and in the student machinations of the time, he lent a distant, but critical, patronage. Though William's family was more prosperous than mine (his father owned a bottling company), we both went through the public high-school system and had little in common with Oxford's ubiquitous Etonians. As a junior member of the Machine, it was my job to watch the activities of the godfather and learn from them; and from William, you could learn a lot. He was publicly mild-mannered to a fault, but privately as cunning as a Daley or a Tweed. He had a handful of pathologically devoted friends, and his disparate political energies were harnessed by focusing on one enemy—I think the poor guy's name was Pelling—and grinding him into the political dust. William taught me, as did his underlings, that the critical political art is spending time with people, slowly building up their trust, forging careful alliances and then, at least when necessary, stabbing them in the back. It wasn't my style; and my slide up Oxford's greasy student pole was a more theatrical endeavor. (I will spare you the details, but my hustings speech for Union president was delivered in full makeup and costume fresh from a performance in the Oxford Playhouse's *The Merchant of Venice.* I won by seven votes out of an electorate of several thousand.) William was an altogether subtle operator. He was a low-key Machiavellian with a twinkle in his eye and a shiv up his sleeve. Which is why his recent come-from-behind triumph in a nasty piece of Tory Party infighting hardly came as a shock.



BUT UNLIKE, SAY, WILLIAM JEFFERson Clinton, William Jefferson Hague's political skills were never without moral or intellectual moorings. He was a Thatcherite then, and he's a Thatcherite now. He had a genuinely independent mind and coasted through his finals with a breezy first-class degree. He favored constitutional reform—Tory heresy then and now—and practiced transcendental meditation, the only subject on which he was truly boring. A rarity in British politics, he was a pro-lifer; and also in favor of the same age of consent for gays and straights (at Oxford, he held a pioneering debate on the subject). He was, and is, preternaturally square, but he loathed sanctimony and was fond of many of the colorful characters, not to say cranks, who enlivened Oxford political life. Two years ago, we caught up again in Washington, and I took him to Adams Morgan Day, a multicultural Latino festival in my D.C. neighborhood. It was over 90 degrees, and William showed up in a stiff English shirt and colonial shorts, and flashed his enigmatic, Yorkshire grin at everything he came across. He is, in this sense, an old type of Tory—solid, but curious—and I wasn't surprised to find out a couple of weeks ago that he publicly endorsed same-sex marriage. It is of a piece with his own strong sense of self, and adventurous political imagination.

THE WORLD IS RIGHTLY FOCUSED on Tony Blair right now, but I bet you William turns out to be the more significant character. Blair, like Clinton, represents little more than the surrender of postwar liberalism, the consolidation of the right's total displacement of the left. Hague, on the other hand, is a sign of what's next. He's a Euroskeptic, not an anti-Europe dogmatist; a patriot, not a nationalist. His early appointments suggest he'll direct the Tories away from the European obsession and toward a surgical strike on the domestic welfare state: means-testing entitlements, restructuring welfare, privatizing pensions and (with any luck) further reforming Britain's sclerotic health care system. But he'll likely do so with a strong strain of social liberalism. Homosexual equality is one facet of this; more ease with a multiracial Britain may be another. Back at Oxford, in our hubristically undergraduate way, a bunch of us postulated that the really critical moment would not be Thatcher's stemming the socialist tide, but the next offensive on the middle-class entitlement state. That, we grandly predicted, would be our generation's task—some time after the next millennium. Could we really wither the state away in a satisfying inversion of Marx? Well, thanks to William, we will soon find out.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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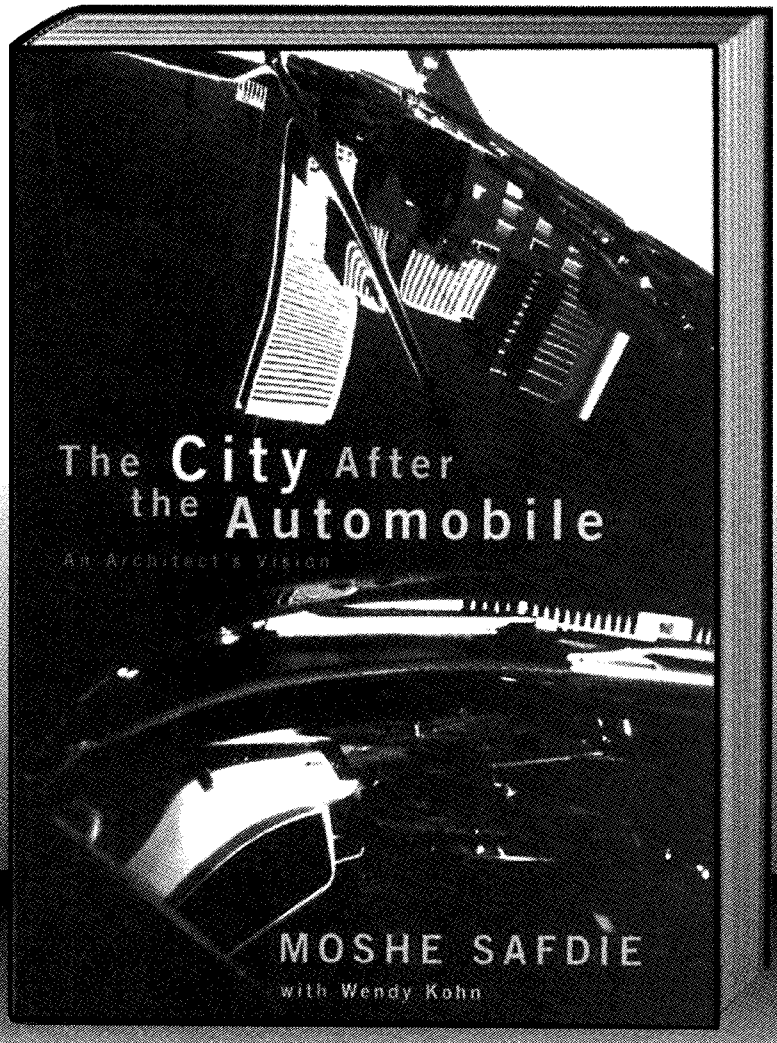

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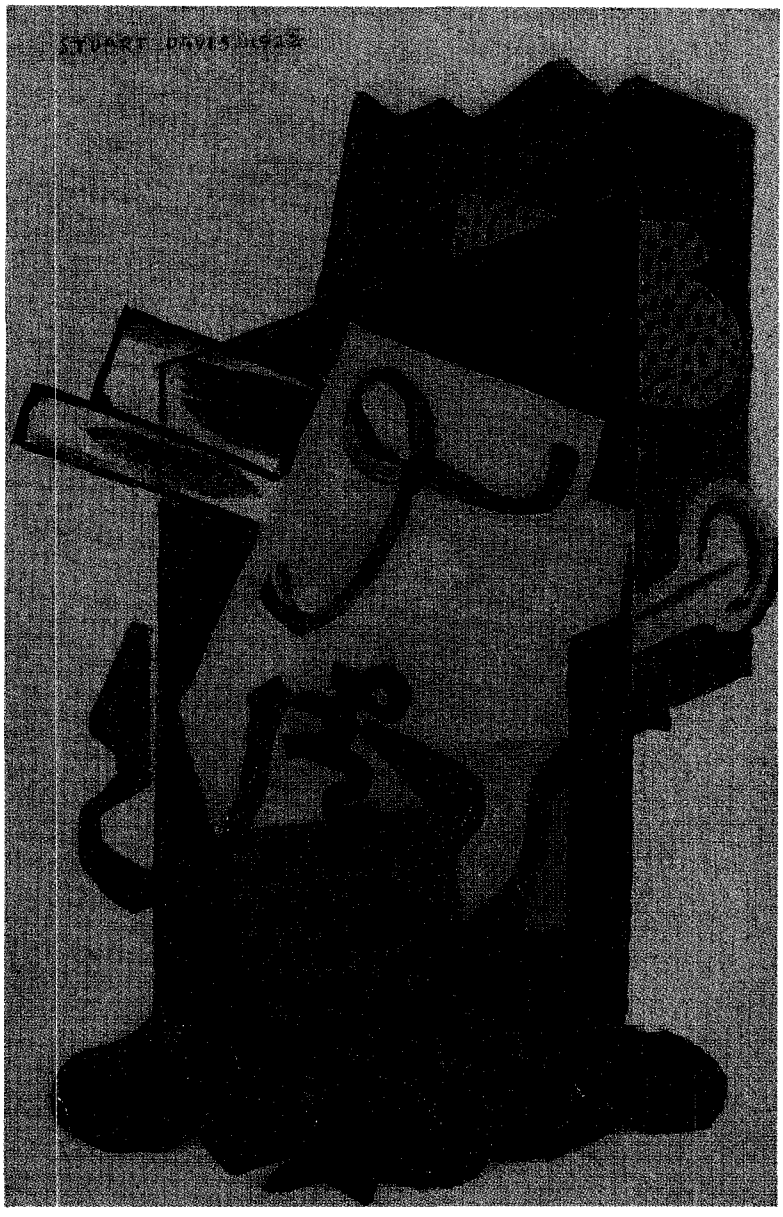

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